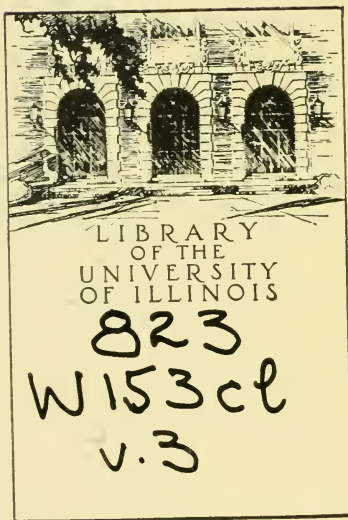





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THE
CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.

VOL. III.

LONDON :
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THE
CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE,
AND
THE SISTERS.

BY ELLEN WALLACE.

Why very well then — I hope here be truths.

Measure for Measure.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1840.

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THE SISTERS.

Why, very well then—I hope here be truths.

Measure for Measure.

THE SISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

Hers was that cottage on the rising ground—
'Tis larger than the rest, and whence indeed
You might expect a lady to proceed.

CRABBE.

THE village of Wargrave was a pretty retired place, about thirty miles distant from London; no spot could be prettier or more tempting as a summer residence; in the winter all country villages have their disadvantages. The last arrival in Wargrave was a family consisting of a widow lady and her two daughters, named Merton. They had taken one of the smallest and most picturesque places in the neighbourhood, consisting of a low, old-fashioned house, and a garden thick with

shrubs, and moreover ornamented with a beautiful stream overshadowed by large old trees.

Now the Mertons kept two maid servants and a man, an elderly respectable looking man, who did not wear a livery; and they had a carriage, but no horses, which the people at Wargrave took for granted was a relic of better times: moreover, the Wargrave people wondered who was to attend to the garden, as they had heard of no gardener, and of course it could not be expected that a man out of livery would stoop to make himself generally useful; and they charitably wondered how poor Mrs. Merton would be able to get on with only one housemaid, and seven bed-rooms, or eight, they were not quite sure which — and indeed they wondered how she could possibly take a house which had so many more rooms than she could want. Again, they were at fault with regard to her exact age; they had thought, the first Sunday

that she came to church, that she was an elderly woman; and the next Sunday, by a natural transition, they pronounced her quite a young woman, and indeed wondered if those two tall girls could possibly be her own daughters; and then the married ladies who had daughters of their own, pitied Mrs. Merton for having two such remarkably plain daughters; and the single ladies said behind the married ladies' backs, that it was very easy to know why Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Hobson, and Mrs. Clapton talked so, for the Miss Mertons were a great deal better-looking than their poor girls.

Then all the ladies together pitied Mrs. Merton for bringing two girls to such an out-of-the-way place as Wargrave, where there was now scarcely any society, and where she could get no good masters, as they found to their cost with their girls, and they asked each other how she expected her daughters to settle in such a place, for they supposed she did not expect to live for ever; with several

other pleasant questions, which to this day remain unanswered. But though the curiosity of everybody was very strong, I am happy to state that their sense of propriety was much stronger. Nobody would call on Mrs. Merton until somebody had called first, or until somebody had found out who she was. She might be a swindler, or a Roman Catholic, or a ——— this last conjecture was only expressed by a long shake of the head. Meanwhile the gossiping went on briskly about them. The eldest Miss Simpson found out that they were very *odd*, in proof whereof she adduced that the youngest Miss Merton looked off her book very much on Sunday, while the eldest was so vastly attentive, that it was over devout for a young person, never lifting up her eyes, as if she had something to be ashamed of. Mrs. Perkins likewise thought that the lace with which their black mantles was trimmed was much too expensive for them, considering the style in which they lived, and she

did not like to see people overdrest ; while Mrs. Clapton said it was evident they were not without society ; for while she was paying her bill at the butcher's, she saw a haunch of mutton which was going to the Mertons', so of course they were going to have somebody to dinner.

It was, I think, the third Sunday after their arrival, that the Wargrave people, on coming out of church, saw Colonel and Mrs. Marshall shake hands very cordially with the Mertons, and even walk part of the way home with them. Here was a clue to the secret ; the Marshalls knew the Mertons, and the Marshalls had a larger house and establishment than anybody in Wargrave ; therefore, of course, the Mertons were visitable people. The very next morning as early as twelve o'clock, the four Miss Simpsons rang at Mrs. Merton's gate.

Mrs. Merton was not at home, and the Miss Simpsons left their cards.

But Mrs. Clapton, having a family to take care of, was naturally more cautious in her proceedings; she called on the Marshalls to make inquiries, previous to committing herself by beginning an acquaintance with Mrs. Merton. Mrs. Marshall was fortunately at home, lounging in a great arm-chair, with a book in her hand, and a lap-dog at her feet, and a taper Indian vase of rose-water at her side. She was a petted beauty, and lived in such luxury and enjoyment, that she provoked the envy of many of her neighbours; Mrs. Clapton for one, who always thought it a pity that Mrs. Marshall had not a dozen children to take care of, instead of those two poor things, who, she dared say, were left to the servants in a shameful manner.

After the usual remarks, which Mrs. Clapton somewhat hurried over, she proceeded to business.

“I think you know the Mertons,” she began.

“ Yes, Colonel Marshall knew them many years ago ; I have only just become acquainted with them.”

“ Pleasant people ? ”

“ Very much so.”

“ Do they live in any sort of style ? ” asked Mrs. Clapton.

“ In a very good style,” replied Mrs. Marshall, which was strictly true ; their style throughout their establishment was exactly proportioned to their means.

“ Do they mean to visit much ? ”

“ I believe not ; they visit me, I am glad to say.”

“ How old do you suppose Miss Merton to be ? ”

“ I know her age exactly,” said Mrs. Marshall smiling, “ and it will bear telling : she is just nineteen.”

“ Pray,” said Mrs. Clapton in a low tone, “ *who was* Mr. Merton ? ”

“ He was a barrister fast rising into eminence ; he died three or four years ago.”

“ Affairs a little involved, I am afraid ?” said Mrs. Clapton mysteriously.

“ I believe not at all,” replied Mrs. Marshall ; “ but of course his widow cannot live in the style she did when her husband was alive.”

“ But where has Mrs. Merton been living since her husband’s death,” asked Mrs. Clapton ; “ you will excuse my inquiries, because, you know, with my young people——.”

Of course this was an important question, because Heaven knew where Mrs. Merton had spent those four years ; in the King’s Bench, perhaps.

“ She remained in London, as long as she thought masters important to her daughters’ education, and then she gladly brought them into the country.”

“ Well, I hope she does not mean to shut them up,” said Mrs. Clapton ; “ I think young

people should be sociable." Mrs. Marshall thought so too, and she had no doubt that Mrs. Merton would allow her daughters to mix with their neighbours.

Then Mrs. Clapton wished particularly to know what Mr. Merton died of.

Mrs. Marshall wondered whether Mrs. Clapton asked this question for the sake of her young people;—but as she was so desirous of knowing everything relating to the Mertons, Mrs. Marshall told her all she knew about them. Mrs. Merton was a Miss Brunton.

Here she was stopped by good Mrs. Clapton, who, with some trepidation, begged to know if she was any relation to *those* Bruntons who used to be on the stage.

"No, she was of an old and respectable family; from Wiltshire, she believed. She had some fortune, and very early in life, she married Mr. Merton, then a young man just called to the bar."

Mrs. Clapton merely remarked that she did

not approve of early marriages, and suffered Mrs. Marshall to proceed.

“ For many years Mr. Merton had suffered very much from bad health ; he was a man of remarkable talent and acquirement, which, together with a great deal of practice in his profession, gradually wore him out. He was recommended to travel, and he made a tour in Germany with his wife and daughters. On his return, he was greatly improved in health, and it was hoped by his friends that, with common care, he might follow up the brilliant career that his talents promised for him. It so happened that a few months after his return, the cholera made its first appearance in this country. Some persons had been seized with it in London, and Mrs. Merton was very anxious that they should remove into the country. But Mr. Merton did not believe the disease to be infectious, and his family were easily persuaded to think as lightly of the danger as he did. There was a young

German in town at this time, from whose family Mr. Merton had received great kindness when he was in Germany; this young man fell suddenly ill, and there were great fears entertained that his disorder was the cholera. Mr. Merton, knowing that every sort of sickness went under that dreaded name, was not deterred a moment from seeing his young friend, and he remained with him until his death, which took place in a few hours; there could be no doubt that his complaint was what they feared. Mr. Merton resolved not to risk bringing the complaint back to his family, so he remained where he was, and sent his earnest entreaties to his wife and daughters that they would not attempt to see him at present; for himself he had still no fear. That night he was seized with the disease. He endeavoured in the first stage of his illness to give some directions respecting his family—to his surprise, his eldest daughter was there to receive them; nothing could keep her from his side,—

there was Anne for her mother she said—and in life or death, she would remain with him. Perhaps she hoped that she might not survive her father, to whom she was most ardently attached,—but the agony of her feelings proved her safeguard, and though she never stirred from him until he died, she escaped the infection. Mrs. Marshall thought there was much courage and character in this conduct from a girl of fifteen.”

Mrs. Clapton, who had listened with great indifference to this frightful account, remarked with an air of complacency that it was very shocking, and she sincerely pitied the poor Mertons; and then she took her leave.

Mrs. Merton and her two daughters were sitting in a shady part of the garden after luncheon, reading and talking, when a ring at the gate announced a fresh visiter.

“Are they to come in, mamma, whoever they are,” said Anne.

“Oh! yes, my dear,” said Mrs. Merton,

taking her gloves from her work-basket ; “ we are at home.”

“ I am not,” said Helen haughtily ; “ as a matter of courtesy, people should have called before.”

“ I hope we shall not be sent for,” said Anne, drawing out of her curls a number of sweet peas with which she had just been decking herself. “ I do so dislike morning visitors.”

It was a strange thing, the likeness between those two sisters, so dissimilar in character and pursuits. Both had the same profusion of light brown hair, crisp, and gold-tinted, as in a portrait of Titian’s ; but Helen’s was braided round her small Greek head, while Anne still suffered her silken ringlets to fall over her neck and shoulders. Both had the same dark hazel-eye, curtained with long curved eye-lashes, but the arch merriment that lurked in Anne’s, was the very opposite to the dreamy abstraction of Helen’s gaze. Each

had the small square mouth, scarcely exceeding in width the breadth of the nostrils, but Helen's took that beautiful form so poetically likened by the Greeks to the bow of Cupid,—a form that gives the indelible expression of desire, ambition—still enduring when all earthly hope is gratified; a physical sign of the immortal destiny of the soul. Such is the mouth in the bust of the young Hercules, that undying incarnation of young and lofty hope. Anne's mouth was flexible and sweet; now smiling, now pouting, the index of her ever-shifting thoughts. Both had that pearly transparency of skin, seldom met with even in fair complexions; but on Anne's cheek the rich warm crimson seemed to linger, like the hues of sunset on a silver cloud, while Helen's colour was more faint and rare, but her paleness was beautiful.

The sisters sat together under the trees. Helen, with a volume of Spenser, from which she occasionally read snatches to little Anne,

who seated on the grass at her feet, leaned over the water, sometimes aiming at the fishes with little pebbles, sometimes dipping her fingers into the stream, and flinging off the drops upon her sister's hair.

The old servant, who had been working at one of the flower beds, came and leaned against the tree at which they sat.

"Well, Downs," said little Anne, "here is a warm day, and a fine day, though you said —"

"What did I say, Miss Anne," said Downs, slowly: he was a complete character.

"Why, you said it would rain — what was it? — I do believe you said it would rain pitchforks!"

"No, Miss Anne, I only said cats and dogs."

"Very well — now tell us the news — you have always a little bit of news, you know, Downs."

"Yes, Miss Anne, I have got a bit of news. I was told — I did not see it; but I was told

that a little bird got into my strawberry beds this morning, and eat all the ripe strawberries."

"Oh! that was a very great mistake, Downs," said Anne, laughing; "have you nothing but that shabby little bit of news, to tell us, Downs?"

Downs took off his hat, looked into it, and put it on again.

"I know you have — you came here on purpose to say something — what is it now? don't tease."

Helen laughed at Anne, and Downs remarked to Helen that Miss Anne was a very curious young lady; and then Downs told his news. That old queer-looking place, Falcon House, had been put into repair, and Sir Edward Falconer, the owner, and his mother, had come to live there — had come, or were coming, Downs didn't know which — and it was the talk of the village. (Helen readily believed that —) and Downs thought it would be a nice thing for the young ladies, a young Baro-

net coming to the place, for it would make it very gay for them, and he had heard say young ladies liked gay doings. Then he became suddenly industrious, and walked off to his flower-bed.

Here was an event for the village, and to say the truth villages are sadly deficient in events; but then, when they have one, they make the most, the very most of it. Since the arrival of Mrs. Merton and her two daughters, there had not been an incident so productive of excitement and gossip.

The Miss Simpsons had told the Miss Smiths that Mrs. Clapton was going to part with her cook, and the Miss Smiths had told back again that they feared poor little Mrs. Marshall led a sad life with Colonel Marshall — though they couldn't but say it served her very right, as she could only have married him for a home; and that she had come to church on Sunday fortnight with red eyes. And Mrs. Grubb had said, with a sneer, that Miss Mer-

ton was very blue, and had written a poem — she had — she certainly ought to have been mending her stockings : not that the whole conclave could prove against her that she had ever been seen to wear stockings with holes in them, but that young ladies ought to be domestic, and it was a pity when they made themselves conspicuous, and they had better mend brand-new stockings than write verses ; and they were thankful that their sisters, or daughters, as the case might be, had never written a verse in their lives.

And now there came a young Baronet with a fine property, and a mother to keep his house, and preside at his dinner parties. And the young ladies — there were plenty of them in Wargrave that were in a state of great excitement. Sir Edward Falconer was such a sweet name. Mrs. Falconer was such a charming woman — such a delightful mamma — so much nicer than any of their own mammas — a complimentary way of thinking in which their

dear mammas seemed very willing to join. Then Sir Edward was a dear — a love — a horrid blue handkerchief which he wore was pronounced to be so becoming—he was so very handsome — a man with a cold stern face, indifferent features: light hair and black brows — a man who at three and twenty looked not a day younger than five and thirty—he was everything that was charming. People called at his house, and consulted about the parties they should give him, and the young ladies dropped in by twos and threes at Mrs. Blond the dressmaker's.

The day after he appeared at church the three Miss Perkinses called on Mrs. Merton. They were shown into the pretty morning-room, where Mrs. Merton was writing, the offending poetess hemming a handkerchief, and little Anne filling a flower-stand.

“ Well, and have you called on the Falconers?” said the eldest Miss Perkins to Mrs. Merton.

“ No, and we do not intend it — we see but little company.”

“ Everybody has called,” said Jane Perkins.

“ I dare say,” replied Mrs. Merton.

“ Do you think Sir Edward handsome?” asked the youngest Miss Perkins of Helen.

“ I have never seen him,” she replied.

“ He was at church yesterday, and his mother the Sunday before.”

“ Yes; but we sit with our backs to his pew.”

“ And do you mean to say you never looked round?”

“ Why should I? Is he so handsome then?”

“ Very!” said all three Miss Perkinses.

“ La! my dear, but a baronet!” said Fanny Perkins.

“ I have only known three baronets,” said Helen, smiling, “ in my life; and they all happened to be very disagreeable people.”

“ You will not be anxious about him?” said Jane Perkins.

“ I really cannot.”

“ And your mamma doesn’t mean to visit.”

“ No.”

“ What a bore ! ”

“ For them, or us ? ”

Jane laughed, and said, “ For both, she thought.”

The Perkinses were succeeded by Mrs. Grubb — a mischievous widow of thirty-five, who had no children, and therefore was at liberty to devote a great deal of her time to the concerns of her neighbours, and not a few spare minutes to ingenious little inventions respecting probable marriages, births, or insolvencies. This amiable lady strongly resembled a wasp in person — she was a thin, dry yellow little body, with a small buzzing voice, the most exasperating in the world. Mrs. Grubb had her tale of the young baronet. She didn’t like his looks — she saw him at church, staring up into the gallery at Mrs. Patten’s pretty housemaid : she thought it was bad taste to say

the least of it; and she had heard that Mrs. Falconer was a very *odd* woman — she did not know what to say about calling there — she had not been yet, and she had heard that the young baronet smoked cigars, which was a very nasty practice.

It was the fate of the Mertons, for the next few weeks, to hear very little talked of but the Falcons. The chairs and tables at Falcon House — Mrs. Falconer's carriage, and Sir Edward's phaeton — the gardener, and undergardener — the very poultry-yard and stables were discussed.

“And do you really mean,” said Anne, “not to call upon the Falcons at all?”

“No, my dear,” said her mother; “do you wish to know them?”

“Why, I am curious — when people are so much talked of, I like to form an opinion myself of their merits.”

“Little Anne turned philosopher?” said Helen.

“ But why won’t you visit, mamma ? ” asked Anne.

“ Because, my dear, we live in a different style — it is not likely that our society would prove an acquisition to them ; and it would not be pleasant for us to meet them on any but equal terms.”

“ But we know the Marshalls ? ”

“ Yes ; circumstances may make us acquainted with persons much richer than ourselves ; but in general I think such acquaintances are very embarrassing.”

“ I wish society were more defined,” said Helen, “ as it is now in Austria — every class strongly marked, and no possibility of stepping beyond the limits of your own set. I think that social intercourse must be carried to perfection under such a system. It is the only way of realizing the highest dream of democracy — you associate only with your acknowledged equals — no fear of one half of the company looking down on the other half. And

the paltry feeling which pervades all classes here of endeavouring to push themselves among their superiors, how delightful if that could be made impossible: for surely nothing is more lowering to the character than to force yourself among people unwilling to receive you — actually to sue for contempt.”

“ But Helen,” said Mrs. Merton, “ would you not allow talent to be a passport everywhere ? ”

But *to what?* To persons of rank and fashion? to the mechanism, the inanity, the vegetable existence that characterises their society? I would warn any one possessing a spark of talent from such a circle, as Ulysses from the palace of Circe. Oh! let people of talent and acquirement associate together, and speak their own fine language clearly and well, and enjoy what is great and beautiful, instead of stifling their excellence that they may be fit companions for fashionable men and women.”

“ Only listen to Helen ! ” said Anne, “ but

do come, and transpose this song for me — it is so high that I do nothing but scream when I try to sing it.”

“ Is it a minor? Try C minor.”

“ Oh! but there are so many sharps to play.”

“ Only four — now listen.”

“ How sweet! play it again. Oh! what a creamy key!”

“ Dear Anne, what a phrase!”

“ Now try G minor — that is richer — only the tuner drives all the discords into those uncommon keys.”

“ Well Anne,” said Helen, rising from the piano, “ no one can accuse you of being too technical in your remarks on music.”

CHAPTER II.

Fer. How will this wrangling end ?

Leo. ————— As it began.

At least on one side — *noisy* words may calm
To melting vows, as the rough wind sinks down
To zephyr's balmy whispers : these are bitter —
And such change not, or changing turn to hate.

Anon.

ONE bright morning, as Helen was busy working in the garden, Mrs. Marshall's little pony carriage stopped at the Mertons' gate. Colonel Marshall was driving her.

Helen ran down to greet her friend.

“ Five minutes, Gertrude,” said the Colonel.

“ Oh ten, please, Ernest ! ”

“ Well, then, ten.”

“ Now Helen, dear,” said Mrs. Marshall,

taking her arm, and leading her along the lawn by the water side. "I may only speak four words, you see, my good friend is so impatient. You will come and dine with me to-day?"

"I will ask mamma."

"No need of that — she will say yes, if you do. You will come?"

"With all my heart — am I to make a toilet?"

"No — yes: pretty well — nobody's coming except — there, he beckons! hold your tongue, Ernest — not that he said anything. Does he call this ten minutes? I have so many things to say to you. Come early."

"I will: did you say you were to have a party?"

"No; just no one, except the people in the house: that is why I so much wish you to come. I want you to meet Sir Edward Falconer *alone* — you understand. He is a young man of great talent — you will be delighted with him — he is a great friend of ours, and he

never shines in general society ; besides, that he is so beset there by the young ladies and their mammas."

"Then," said Helen, "do let me come to you to-morrow : I have no wish to beset Sir Edward Falconer."

"I will take no refusal," said Mrs. Marshall ; "I expect him to be charmed with you, and who knows ? in fact, I have settled that you come — so remember, six o'clock.—Adieu !"

"Now you see, mamma," said Helen, after telling her mother of her engagement, that Mrs. Marshall thinks it the kindest thing she can do for me to give me a chance of pleasing a man who may be as little *worth* pleasing as anybody I ever saw, and totally unsuited to me in every way."

"And to think," said little Anne, indignantly, "that Helen should require to be *alone* to fascinate anybody ! as if she were not better than all the other young ladies !"

"Mrs. Merton hoped and believed that Mrs.

Marshall was no matchmaker : she most likely only wished to be amused by seeing two persons of talent meet in society. She wished Helen an evening of much enjoyment."

"Helen was quite sure that Mrs. Marshall would make up no match for her ! Nothing but matches thought of whenever young ladies were concerned ! She thanked goodness she had other things to think about."

Mrs. Merton and Anne laughed at Helen's warmth. She continued her animadversions.

"And with regard to this Sir Edward, why should he not shine in society ? If he had talent, why should he be a miser of it ? It showed his conceit, and his want of kindly feeling. She was sorry that she was going to meet him. If he chose to exert himself well—if not, it was very certain that she did not intend to amuse him !"

Then she went up stairs, and laid out the plainest and least becoming of her dresses—not that she thought, for a moment, that there was

any danger of Sir Edward Falconer's falling in love with her, but she was determined to let Mrs. Marshall see that she had no intention of trying to make him do so. When Helen arrived at Mrs. Marshall's, she was introduced to a Mrs. and Miss Philipson, well bred, quiet women, and to an old man, whose name she did not hear; and she saw two or three young men standing by the window, who were not named to her; and then she fell into a discourse with Colonel Marshall, about a meadow he advised her mother to let, until dinner was announced.

"It is of no use waiting, I suppose, Ernest," said Mrs. Marshall to her husband.

"To be sure not — never wait for a single man," he replied.

"What miserable wretches you single men are, to be sure!" said Mrs. Marshall to one of the young men, who seemed very anxious to escape offering his arm to Helen.

The young man, who wished to persuade

himself that he was very fashionable, said,
“ He didn’t think so.”

In the midst of dinner, Sir Edward Falconer made his appearance.

“ How do you do, Edward ? ” said the Colonel.

“ Be ashamed of yourself,” said Gertrude.

From which sentences Helen inferred that he was on a very intimate footing with the Marshalls.

Now unfortunately he had been expressly invited to meet Helen, and he therefore was prepared to look on her with no favourable eyes.

Mrs. Marshall had contrived that a chair should be left next to Helen for the Baronet, and he took it with a very ill grace, making, at the same time, an abrupt apology for his late arrival. His mother was ill, and he had waited to hear the verdict of the physician.

“ I hope it was favourable,” said Mrs. Marshall.

“ Very much so,” he replied.

“ To what does Mrs. Falconer attribute her indisposition ? ” she asked, with an air of interest.

“ I really don’t know,” said he, shortly.

Miss Philipson good-naturedly addressed a few remarks to him, to which he replied with an uncourteous degree of abruptness.

Helen never uttered a word. She was quite indignant at his want of politeness; and at dessert, when the Baronet coldly asked her if he might give her some grapes, she declined them with a disdain that his question had hardly deserved.

She had quite decided, before she reached the drawing-room, that she had never met with so odious a person.

“ Well, dear, and how do you like him ? ” said Gertrude, as soon as the ladies were alone.

“ Like, whom ? ” asked Helen.

“ Nay, Sir Edward,” replied her friend.

“ Can you ask ? ” exclaimed Helen.

“ Yes, can you ask ? ” said the Miss Perkins, who had come into tea : “ is he not delightful ? ”

“ I am sure if you use that term,” said Helen, “ we cannot be thinking of the same person. Sir Edward Falconer appears to me the very reverse of anything pleasing or amiable, or indeed, commonly well bred.”

“ Oh ! but he has been so much spoiled,” urged Mrs. Marshall.

“ I dare say there is a reason for his disagreeable manners,” said Helen, warming with the subject ; “ I do not suppose him a miracle ; no villain lives who has not been made so by circumstance ; I should guess that the poor man had been pampered into his absurdities.”

“ Oh ! you will like him when you know more of him,” said Gertrude.

“ Shall I ? ” said Helen. “ I will take care that I do know no more of him,—a sulky man ! The thing is so ridiculous. Ill-tempered ! vulgarly rude ! When once a man is cross with-

out making people afraid of him, he presents the most ugly and pitiful spectacle in the world ! ”

Mrs. Marshall only laughed at Helen's eagerness ; and as soon as the gentlemen came in, she brought up Sir Edward and formally introduced him to her, with the remark, that he was no doubt well acquainted, by report, with Miss Merton, and that she had great pleasure in making two persons of talent acquainted with each other.

Sir Edward was immediately unconscious of any claim to such a distinction, and Helen looked her pity and contempt for his avowal.

Soon after, she sat down to look over some prints with Miss Philipson, and Sir Edward endeavoured to make his way to Mrs. Marshall, but he was successively stopped by each of the three Miss Perkinses, who had prepared some little question as he passed, in the hope that he would take his place beside them.

At last he reached Mrs. Marshall's sofa, and

as he by no means lowered his voice, Helen could not avoid hearing their conversation.

“ Why did you introduce me ? ” he began, in a surly tone.

“ Why ? ” said Mrs. Marshall, gaily ; “ I hope you feel very grateful.”

“ Who, I ? when you know there is nothing on earth I detest like a blue stocking, a poetaster.”

“ How dare you say such a word ? ” she continued playfully : “ have you never read ‘ Cyprian ? ’ ”

“ No, thank heaven ! ”

“ Well, then, I’ll lend it to you.”

“ You are very obliging.”

“ You know what Mr. — said, when it appeared ? ”

“ Not I ! ” —

Gertrude told him some graceful and high praise.

“ How much did that cost ? Five pounds, I suppose.”

“ Not a sous—it was quite voluntary. Why, how cross you are to-night, Sir Edward.”

“ I know, I am as savage as ——.”

“ Oh ! don’t search for a simile,” said Gertrude, laughing ; “ we can all see *how* savage you are ! ”

Sir Edward could not help smiling.

“ Now,” said Mrs. Marshall, “ as I like a reason for everything, pray tell me, what right have you to be cross ? ”

“ Every right — I’m very cold.”

“ Cold in June ! ”

“ Your June is much more cold than an Italian March.”

“ That is the way with all you travellers ; you go abroad only to learn how to complain of home.”

“ Will you sing to me ? ” said Sir Edward, “ and then at least I shall not miss the music of Italy.”

“ A compliment from you ? That almost deserves a song, but you shall have better singing than mine.”

“ I don’t want better ! ”

“ You don’t deserve better, you mean; but you shall have it — that is, if I can prevail upon Miss Merton to favour us.”

“ Oh ! don’t disturb the young lady’s studies,” said he, with a sneer.

Mrs. Marshall did urge her request, however, and Helen begged to be excused, as she had brought no music with her.

Now as Helen hardly ever sang from music, Mrs. Marshall called her idle; but she knew pretty well that it was of no use to press any matter that was in opposition to Helen’s will.

Colonel Marshall asked Helen to play at chess. She was glad of anything that would take her quite out of Sir Edward’s way. She had just begun her game, when the Colonel was summoned away; he was a magistrate, and somebody was waiting without, for a warrant, or something of the kind. He called Sir Edward, and desired him to take his

place at the chess-board. Nothing could be more disagreeable to Helen. She begged the Colonel to let her wait till he returned ; she was in no hurry to finish her game, but he brought up Sir Edward almost by force.

“ On my word I know so little of chess,” said the Baronet.

“ You always beat me, I know,” returned the Colonel.

“ I am not in the humour to play to-night.”

“ Nor I,” said Helen, sweeping down the men with one movement of her little hand.

The Colonel desired Sir Edward to replace them, and to use his best endeavours to defeat her, until he came back.

“ You hear the Colonel’s orders,” said Sir Edward, picking up the men.

“ I never obey orders,” said Helen, as she rose from the table.

“ You take the black men, of course—all ladies do,” said the Baronet, replacing them ; as if convinced in his own mind that Helen

would never deny herself the pleasure of playing with *him*.

“ I take neither,” replied Helen ; and she walked away to the farthest end of the room.

She sat down by Miss Jane Perkins, and began the usual string of nothings that young ladies go through when they meet together.

“ Can you tell me if the Simpsons are returned yet ? ”

“ Oh yes, they came home last Wednesday.”

“ I hope they enjoyed their excursion.”

“ Very much,” said Jane Perkins, “ they went almost all over South Wales.”

“ They had very fine weather, I think,” said Helen.

“ Only a little rain during the first week.”

“ We have had none.”

“ No,” said Jane Perkins, “ but Wales is such a rainy place.”

“ I suppose Miss Maria Simpson made a great many sketches ? ”

“ Oh ! yes. I had the pleasure of wading

through them when last I called. It is a pity she draws so very badly."

Helen was silent.

"Don't you think her drawings are vile things?"

"Not quite," said Helen; "they are tolerably correct, and they remind her of the places she has visited. I only wish I could draw half as well."

"Did you ever see such dressers as the Simpsons are? O my dear! their bonnets last Sunday! I thought I should have died of laughing when they came into the pew."

Helen had not seen these Sunday bonnets.

Sir Edward Falconer was standing near, and appeared to be counting off on his fingers every sentence that Helen uttered, as if he expected that she should say something worthy of her reputation for talent.

So having heard her say nothing that he could pronounce to be particularly clever, he thought he would make trial of her skill, by

asking her if she did not consider a lady's dress to be the surest index of her mind.

Helen thought it was quite as often an index of the state of her purse; many women were unable to afford as good a toilet as they would like to make.

Sir Edward confessed that Miss Merton's remark was a great deal too deep for him; and Helen who had seen nothing deep in what she had said, except that it happened to be true, could only imagine that he alluded to the proverb which declares that truth lies in the bottom of a well, so she turned her back upon him without ceremony, and renewed her conversation with Miss Jane Perkins. She was rejoiced when it was time to go away. She had felt annoyed and constrained the whole evening by the presence of that disagreeable Baronet. She told her mother in general terms what she thought of him, and how she was determined never to meet him again.

As soon as the party had dispersed, Mrs. Marshall, after scolding Sir Edward for his behaviour, took down a small gilt volume, and coolly insisted on his reading it through that evening before he stirred from his chair.

It was "Cyprian."

He begged to be spared such a task.

She assured him that if he did not comply with her request, she would never speak to him again as long as she lived.

But he was really anxious to get home to see how his mother was.

Then Mrs. Marshall only desired that he should take the book with him, and read it through before he presumed to sleep.

This he promised to do, and he kept his word.

CHAPTER III.

Emilia.—Here is a change indeed !

Othello.

“ Now, Annie, are you ready ? ”

“ In one minute, Helen ; recollect that I am not so heroic as you, and that I stay to put on my bonnet becomingly.”

“ It is very becoming now, on my word. Let us go down the long walk into the village. I suppose there is such a thing to be met with as a paper of pins.”

“ I dare say, and there is mamma’s letter to put in the post : now for our walk,” said Annie.

The long walk was a very steep path bordered by a grove of large trees which ran

directly into the main street of the village of Wargrave.

“What a disagreeable wretch that Sir Edward must be,” began little Anne.

“Good words, Miss Anne,” said her sister.

“Well, but tell me very particularly what he is like.”

“In person?”

“Yes, first.”

“Well, he is tall—sullen”—

“Stop, Helen — sullen is mental, not personal.”

“But his whole figure seems pervaded by that one expression; if you asked me what hands he had, I should be obliged to say, sullen hands.”

“Go on: what hair has he?”

“Dark.” He happened to have very light hair.

“And what eyes?”

“I do not know; I never find out the colour of people’s eyes, unless they look at me.”

“What a bear!” said Anne to herself.

“Dear me, what have I done?” said Helen laughing.

“I did not mean you, Helen dear,” said Anne, pressing her arm; “I meant the baronet. To think of his never looking at you,—you, the Psyche, as Eric Steinberg used to say.”

“I was a child then,” said Helen, with such a beautiful colour staining her cheeks as would have confirmed her reputation for rouging, had Mrs. Grubb by chance encountered her; “I was a child, and M. Steinberg thought himself privileged to talk nonsense to me.”

“Four years ago,” said Anne, looking mischievously under her sister’s bonnet.

“Four years?—and what a stretch of time!—from fifteen to nineteen, what a long eventful portion of one’s life. Some one says that live as long as you may, the first twenty years are the longest half of your life.”

“ Well,” said Anne, “ it does seem a long time since I was twelve.”

“ I believe it,” said Helen ; “ that time is longest in which most things happen ; at least longest to look back upon : how unutterably long was that year—the—the——.”

“ The year my father died,” said Anne quickly ; feeling her sister’s arm tremble within her own. “ And now tell me of the baronet’s manners.”

“ Very churlish, and cold, and disdainful. He seems to have been made too much of, and to fancy that people are about to pay court to him, and that it is therefore needful to keep them at a distance. He has a spoiled manner, but none of that wayward simplicity that is so charming in a man of genius.”

“ That petted way which Eric Steinberg had,” said Anne.

“ It seems as if he did not like meeting the village people, and therefore he was very cross with Colonel Marshall, and everybody else,” said Helen.

“ An impertinent man ! but is he clever, Helen ? ”

“ What a pity you did not meet him, my dear Anne, you seem very curious about the gentleman.”

“ Who, I ?—not at all.”

“ Well, I should think he was clever,—that sort of talent which enables a man to say to everybody, the thing of all others that will most annoy them.”

“ The charming creature ? — Now Helen, I will have a race down this famous walk, I vow I will ! ”

“ Pray do not,” said Helen ; “ somebody or other will certainly be walking down the street, and you will get such a character——.”

“ See if I do not ! ” cried the wilful girl, and away she flew, her long curls streaming behind her.

Helen followed as fast as she could.

Just as Anne reached the bottom of the walk, a gentleman turned the corner of the

street, and stood exactly before her ; she stopped short, blushed deeply at being caught in so childish an act, and clasped her hands over her face.

“ I hope I did not alarm you, madam,” said the gentleman politely ; but he did not pass on, he stopped to admire the profusion of silken curls, which tossed and tangled by the wind, now rested in beautiful disorder on her shoulders.

“ Not at all, sir,” replied Anne, timidly dropping her hands from her face, and half turning round ; “ it was my fault.”

“ I declare I’m very sorry,” said he smiling ; Anne looked quite up. He had such a beautiful smile.

“ Miss Merton ! ” exclaimed the gentleman, as Helen joined her sister.

Helen bowed coldly to Sir Edward Falconer.

“ I was just coming to your house,” said the Baronet.

Helen with a slighter bow, believed her mother was at home.

“ My errand was to you,” he said.

Then I am happy that I can shorten your task : is it from Mrs. Marshall ? ”

“ This note ” — he began.

Helen held out her hand for it ; “ I will send an answer,” she said, “ if it requires one.”

The Baronet was afraid that would not content Mrs. Marshall ; she had insisted on his bringing an answer himself,—a verbal reply would be sufficient.

“ I prefer writing,” said Helen ; “ and I will make your excuses,— I am going home immediately.”

The Baronet pressed for leave to accompany them, and pleaded again Mrs. Marshall’s commands.

Nothing could be less encouraging than Helen’s permission. She was sorry that he should inconvenience himself so much. So he was seen walking with the Miss Mertons through the village by Mrs. Grubb, and Mrs. Clapton, and two of the Miss Simpsons. They

walked on in silence for some time. Little Anne looked sidelong at the Baronet now and then to see if he had forgotten her curious race, and he caught her eye, and smiled at her, and she wondered how Helen could be so cold to any one who had such a charming smile.

Helen was looking desperately cross — and nothing offends a man so much as a lady's looking cross, — a single man too, — what possible right has she to look cross in his presence? — Does she expect that he will marry her if she shows her temper in that way?

And all the eloquence that ever was written or spoken, will never convince him that the said woman will not think of him a second time, and that he may marry his housemaid to-morrow, without causing her a moment's annoyance or regret.

But as they walked, he saw that Helen had a fine ankle, and a small handsome foot, and that the carriage of her head was very striking, and so, though her lip was curved up,

and her eyelids dropped, he did condescend to address her.

“ Do you like this village ? ” he asked.

“ Not very much,” replied Helen.

“ You have been used to a great deal of gaiety, I presume.”

“ No, by no means.”

“ Are you fond of society ? ”

“ Not of general society.”

“ You will be out of favour, I can tell you, in the village, if they find out that.”

“ I am already,” replied Helen.

The Baronet began to be quite angry that Helen did not try all her arts to make him fall in love with her ; he could not have the pleasure which he enjoyed with most women, of despising her.

“ Oh ! it is such a malicious village ! ” cried little Anne ; “ the people do nothing but abuse one another, and I dare say we come in for our good share—and the best is, they are all trying to convince you that they are

better, or more genteel than their neighbours, while, as far as I can see they are all alike, and genteel too !—who would wish to be *genteel*, except a milliner ? ”

“ Miss Merton,” said the Baronet, turning round and laughing, “ I honour your penetration.”

Anne, like all young people, was highly offended at the idea that she was laughed at, and walked round to the other side of her sister. Sir Edward followed her, and came round again to her side.

“ You thought I was not in earnest,” said he.

Anne blushed and said nothing.

“ But I was, — I thought that you had sketched off in a few words, not only this village, but an exact portrait of every other village I ever saw.”

Helen walked on very fast, — Sir Edward made several unsuccessful attempts to engage her in conversation ; it seemed as if there was

something which he did not know how to say, —at last he exclaimed abruptly——.

“Miss Merton, I am disgusted with myself, and I hardly know how to express it to you: I behaved most wretchedly last night.”

“At least, you owe *me* no apologies,” said Helen; “I took it for granted that you behaved as usual.”

“You could say nothing more severe,” he replied.

“It would surely be more severe to suppose that you could behave otherwise,” said Helen; “one pardons ill-breeding in a man who knows no better, but never in a gentleman.”

“Now, is not that unkind,” said the Baronet in a pathetic tone to Anne, “to say I am no gentleman!”

Little Anne looked very compassionate.

“But although you will not accept my apologies,” he continued, “I can do no less than offer them—about that game of chess.”

“ O sir, pray don’t mention it,” said Helen, hastily : “ be assured that I remember no part of your conduct of last night.”

Here was pride — here was contempt ! To treat a young woman with insolence, and then to find that her feelings had recovered the shock in a single night — that she professed even to have *forgotten* his rudeness. Oh ! no, he might be credulous, but he could not think he had made so slight an impression as that !

“ I wonder what all this is about,” said Anne, who sometimes thought aloud ; “ I heard nothing about chess ! ”

Sir Edward was afraid that he must believe Helen after all : she had not thought the affair worth mentioning to her sister.

“ We are at home now,” said Helen, stopping before their garden-gate ; “ and as you will give yourself the trouble, I must request you to wait a minute, I will not detain you longer, while I answer this note.”

They went into the drawing-room. Helen named Sir Edward to her mother, and then passed into the reading-room adjoining to answer her note. It contained a pressing invitation from Mrs. Marshall to dine with her that day — the carriage should be sent for her, and so on. Colonel Marshall hoped very much that she would read them a scene from Shakespeare : she would meet nobody but Sir Edward Falconer, and he had promised to be very amiable.

Helen wrote a short refusal : she had a slight cold, and could neither read, nor brave the night air.

Meanwhile the Baronet was making observations upon everything about him ; he was struck with the perfect elegance, and total want of pretension or finery that was visible in the room. Open books and work-boxes lay about, as if in constant use ; and though there were many pretty ornaments on the tables they were such as might by possibility be useful.

Even little Anne's guitar was slung with a plain black ribbon ; and, instead of being poetically thrown upon a leaf of music beside the open window, was laid carefully in its open case.

Mrs. Merton was a very striking woman, with a beautiful soft complexion, and dignified carriage. She was dressed very plainly in a black silk gown, a close lace cap, and a large chain of jet beads, with a superb gold crucifix. This last ornament gave great offence to the people of Wargrave : they thought it an affectation—it looked romantic. Had Mrs. Merton explained to them that it was her husband's last gift, and that she had never ceased to wear it since his death, they would have been still more displeased. It was a piece of sentiment very unsuited to her years.

Sir Edward was delighted with her, and exerted himself to be very agreeable. He had no idea of meeting with so finished a gentlewoman. His experience of mothers in general,

had been far from pleasing. Mrs. Merton made no allusion to her daughters in any way, never said they were fond of home and domestic pleasures, never regretted that she had great difficulty in inducing them to go out, never congratulated herself that they had so many resources within themselves: he was quite delighted that he was not asked if he was fond of music, "because Mary doted on it;" or if he drew, "because Selina was so fond of sketching." Mrs. Merton was even obliged to refer to Anne, when he asked, in the course of conversation, if either of the Miss Mertons ever amused themselves by emblazoning coats of arms.

She had travelled, and found that Sir Edward had visited some of the spots she knew. They talked of travellers, and books of travels, of works of art, of scenery, of manners.

Little Anne said nothing, and Helen was busy writing. Then they spoke of Mrs. Merton's house. Sir Edward had known it years

ago, when it had been in the possession of an old bachelor, a great epicure. He described the cold and comfortless appearance of the room in which they now sat; the dreary garden running to waste, which was visible from the large French window opposite to them. It commanded now a very pretty view, seen to great advantage under the hot summer's sun. The thick mossy lawn, the broad clear water to which it sloped down—the sparkling waterfall glancing through a dark thicket of Portugal laurels—the beautiful plane tree that stretched its enormous boughs from the water's edge, almost up to the windows of the house—all were noticed, and admired by the Baronet.

“Anne, little Anne!” cried Helen from the next room, “where have you put the sealing-wax?”

“I'll find it,” said Anne, running to her. “I had it this morning.”

Sir Edward would follow to assist Anne in her search.

“What a delightful study!” said he, as he entered it.

It was a small room with narrow gothic bookcases reaching from the floor to the ceiling round two sides of the room, and crowded with books. There was a large writing-table, and a massive inkstand heaped with pens, and blotting books, and loose leaves of manuscript: nothing of a boudoir about it, except two vases of beautiful flowers.

“Oh! it is not a study,” cried Anne, searching in a large china shell for the sealing-wax, “there’s no studying in this house.”

“It looks like it though,” said Sir Edward, taking up a Virgil from the table.

“Oh! put that down,” cried Anne, throwing the sealing-wax to her sister — “put it down directly — that’s a Latin book of Helen’s!”

“Why should I put it down?”

“Because it must be a dreadful sight to you — gentlemen are so shocked when ladies read

Latin books, that I conclude they find it very distressing to read them themselves."

"Oh! that feeling is fast wearing away," said Sir Edward.

"I am glad of it," said Anne, "though I have no interest in the question, you see, because I know no Latin; but you talked of blazoning—here," she said, pointing to the title-page, "here is Helen's lozenge, which she has blazoned in all her favourite books."

Sir Edward, who still seemed to take a special pleasure in opposing Helen, remarked, "That heraldry was the most utterly useless of all sciences; indeed, the name of science was degraded by being applied to such a study."

Helen replied, quietly, "that many things appear useless at first sight, which a more intimate acquaintance will discover to be very valuable—not that she, for a moment, classed heraldry among those things."

Sir Edward would be very glad to hear what Miss Merton could say in favour of the *utility* of heraldry.

Helen replied, " That those who studied it, generally found it very amusing, and she considered recreation as beneficial and as needful to the mind as labour ; but that heraldry was connected with much that was noble and beautiful in history, which perhaps we should hardly be made acquainted with by any other means. She alluded to the legends regarding the services for which the very old coats had been acquired ; they were not tales of mere valour alone, but of that high disinterested feeling which was then so common among gentlemen ; the chivalrous self-denial which made all peril encountered for another seem trifling — the very religion of heroism — just the sort of feeling, Helen wound up by saying, that you must go back some hundred years to find — the magnanimity which modern gentlemen laugh at."

Of course, Sir Edward denied that men in old times were at all better than they are now.

Helen prevented herself from saying that we

readily disbelieve the excellence which we do not care to attain; but she took up a book that lay on the table, and read the following lines: —

“ Man now his Virtue’s diadem
Puts on, and proudly wears;
Great thoughts, great feelings came to them
Like instincts, unawares;
Blending their soul’s sublimest needs
With tasks of every day,
They went about their gravest deeds,
As noble boys at play.”*

To this Sir Edward replied, “ that Miss Merton evidently was very enthusiastic, and that enthusiasts were apt to invest the past in those colours which our reason forbids us to apply to the present time.

“ She might, or might not, be enthusiastic,” Helen said, “ but her admiration of virtue was strictly reasonable — there was a want of plain sense in refusing to admire virtue.”

* “ The Men of Old,” by Milne.

“The *splendid* virtues,” Sir Edward began.

“That is to say, the *complete* virtues,” rejoined Helen. “Yes, I bestow more admiration on a whole than a part of any virtue. Can you name any one duty which is not splendid when it is entirely fulfilled—it is when it is left half undone that it reaches the average of good people’s performance, and escapes all danger of inspiring enthusiasm.”

“You know Mr. Rush, of this village,” said the Baronet; “his charity, extensive as it is, excites in your mind I dare say but little admiration, because it is not picturesque.”

“Not because it is deficient in picturesque effect,” returned Helen, “but because that very charity is incomplete. His donations are faultless in quantity, but they are given coldly, uncourteously—he is censorious in his opinions, harsh in his language, often in his acts—regardless of the feelings of those whom he relieves—and you call this charity! I am sorry to say this of Mr. Rush, because in per-

forming a part of a duty as steadily as he does, he surpasses a great many of his neighbours. If his charity were complete, it would be splendid — enough,” said Helen, piqued at the cold contempt visible in the face of the Baronet ; “ splendid enough for you to scorn at.”

Sir Edward said, as men generally do when they have not an answer at hand, that Miss Merton was too deep for him.

Helen quietly turned to Anne, and asked her for the taper.

Sir Edward offered his services in lighting it.

“ No thank you,” said Anne, unscrewing the lucifer box.

“ Is not it a pity to soil those hands ?” said Sir Edward.

“ A pity to soil any hands, if there is no water to be had,” said little Anne laughing, as she placed the taper before her sister.

Helen gave Sir Edward her note with many apologies for having kept him so long waiting.

He said, and with truth, that he had found the time too short.

Helen thought he never meant to go away. He lingered to ask Anne if she liked music, and if her guitar was a Spanish one, and if she understood Spanish.

Anne replied that she understood nothing. Helen saved her the trouble of learning, she understood enough for both.

Sir Edward looked towards Helen as if to ask whether this charge was true. She did not seem to think it worth contradicting.

I am afraid that she did not care for his opinion, though he was a single man.

At last, he really went.

“What a nice man!” cried little Anne.

“Well, really, my dear Helen,” said Mrs. Merton, “I think you were rather severe in your strictures upon Sir Edward Falconer. He seems to be very well-behaved.”

Helen laughed.

“I only wish you had seen him last night,”

she said, "You can imagine nothing more impertinent."

Mrs. Merton warned Helen, as she often had done before, not to take a hasty prejudice against any one. It was hardly fair to judge of any individual from the experience of a few hours; a man's character was far too complicated a thing to be so quickly unravelled.

Helen in self-defence, showed her mother Mrs. Marshall's note. "So he really promised to be very amiable, — how extremely condescending, and she was to go and see him in that state as a curiosity; a great curiosity she had no doubt, for him — and the Marshalls liked him: that was so provoking. It is very provoking when people that you like, have any regard for a person that you think particularly disagreeable.

"Though to be sure, Mamma," Helen concluded, "although you would scarcely imagine it, he is, with all his odious rudeness, a gentleman in spite of all."

“ I believe it, I am sure,” said little Anne.

“ Thoroughly well-bred,” said Mrs. Merton.

It made Helen very angry to be agreed with in her assertions ; she had hoped that her mother and Anne would have been quite incredulous.

So to soothe her mind, she flew into the book-room, and read and made notes very earnestly until dinner time.

“ Well,” said Mrs. Marshall, when the Baronet brought her Helen’s note, “ how have you succeeded ? ”

“ You must tell me that.”

“ Ah ! I thought so,” said Mrs. Marshall. It is all your own fault ; she will not come. I do not know what possessed you last night.”

“ What does she say ? ” he asked eagerly.

“ Oh ! nothing ; a mere excuse, — where is Cyprian ? ”

“ What a beautiful little sylph her sister is ! ” he said.

“Is she not?” said Mrs. Marshall: “she is much prettier than Helen.”

“Miss Merton is a beautiful woman,” said the Baronet.

“She looks older than she is,” said Mrs. Marshall. “Helen is only nineteen; but she has gone through a great deal, and nobly.”

“A disappointment?” he asked with a sneer.

“No such thing; I think Helen will never fall in love.”

“You think not?”

“No, not even with you; so do not be frightened. Now, how do you like Cyprian?”

Sir Edward took it out of his pocket and laid it down on the table.

“Well, is that an answer? Come, pray expose your want of taste; say you do not like it; say something.”

“I find it difficult,” he replied, “to say what I think of it: it is perfectly beautiful. I do not mean that it is a poem of the very high-

est order, far from it ; but there is a completeness, a proportion, a freshness about it that delights me. I hope she means to write something else."

" I don't think she will ever write again," said Mrs. Marshall.

" And why not ? "

" I cannot tell you."

And so their conference ended.

CHAPTER IV.

They grew in beauty side by side.
They filled one home with glee.

MRS. HEMANS.

ONE morning as the two sisters were just setting out for a walk, Colonel Marshall came in with a very delicate and highly scented note for Helen.

“ From Mrs. Marshall, of course,” said Helen, tearing it open. But it was not from Mrs. Marshall. Helen frowned, and laughed, and twisted the paper round her fingers in utter perplexity.

“ Did you ever know anything like this ? ” said she to Colonel Marshall.

“ What is it, Helen ? ” said little Anne.

“Why, I can hardly read it. Lady somebody invites me to go to her castle for a few days, to assist in some tableaux they are going to exhibit. I never heard of the person — I shall not go.”

“I was desired to use my best entreaties,” said Colonel Marshall.

“You know her then?” said Helen.

“Yes, we know her very well. Lady de Burgh.”

“Ah! so it is — De Burgh — well, I must write a refusal. Do you take it?”

Gertrude is so anxious that you should appear in these tableaux,” said Colonel Marshall.

“Oh! do, Helen,” said Anne.

“No, I cannot, it is impossible; a perfect stranger,” replied Helen. “These people above one’s own station have no idea that one can be beneath them, and yet a gentlewoman; they do the most ill-bred things with perfect ease. I wonder her ladyship did not offer to hire me for a night or two. Ah! here is Mamma.

Now judge, Mamma, whether I ought to accept this invitation."

Mrs. Merton thought that it should certainly be declined; "but it was a most graceful petition, a most courteous rudeness."

Helen's note was soon completed. She regretted that it was not in her power to accept the invitation with which she had been honoured by Lady de Burgh.

Anne was quite vexed; she should so like to see Helen dressed up — beautiful Helen.

Helen laughed, and reminded Anne that costume dresses were not often becoming: there was nothing like a straw bonnet to show off the face.

The Colonel as he took his leave said, "that since Helen could not come to see them the other day, he should bring down Gertrude to drink tea with her that evening, and Helen should read to them."

Helen promised if they came alone, she would read what they pleased, but she could not, and would not read before strangers.

“ But, how is the cold ? ” said Colonel Marshall smiling, as he was leaving the room.

Helen tried to accomplish a little cough, and said she was not quite free from it.

As the Marshalls were walking through the fields which led to Mrs. Merton’s house, they chanced to meet Sir Edward Falconer ; he was coming to spend the evening with them, and they could do no less than offer to take him on to the Mertons. He was afraid he should be considered an intruder, and so on, but it was evident he was quite prepared to venture notwithstanding.

Colonel Marshall said that Mrs. Merton’s house was one to which he had no reluctance in bringing a friend ; there was a perfect ease, and want of pretension in her way of receiving people which you seldom saw in England ; there was a keeping too in her establishment, and she never attempted to impose it on her guests as a finer one than it really was ; and her daughters were always quietly dressed,

never smart, never negligent; and when a chance visiter came in, there was no scampering up-stairs to array themselves for conquest.

Helen and her sister were reading by the open window, when they arrived. Anne on a low stool with her head resting upon Helen's knee. They were dressed plainly in white muslin, with their hair beautifully arranged.

"Well, young ladies!" said Colonel Marshall.

"Oh! I beg your pardon!" cried Helen, starting up; "my dear Mrs. Marshall, how came it that I did not see you?"

"You had a very interesting book, I suppose; what was it? I believe I need not introduce Sir Edward Falconer."

"Oh! no," said Helen, with a half smile, as she returned his bow.

Anne flew away to find her mamma.

Mrs. Merton sustained the character that Colonel Marshall had given her; she made

Sir Edward feel a welcome guest before his excuses for his intrusion were well uttered.

They went to walk in the garden until tea-time.

Colonel Marshall asked Helen to show the Baronet one of their meadows, which he called very picturesque.

“Would you like to see it?” asked Helen; for she had no wish for a repetition of the chess scene.

“If you will take so much trouble,” he replied.

Helen said that it would give her pleasure, and she led the way without saying another word. She did not even venture on the common courtesy of hoping that Mrs. Falconer was better, lest he should fancy that she had some design upon his heart.

He felt that as it was, she was more gracious than he had any right to expect, and he wondered in his own mind, how much she had overheard of his flattering conversation with Mrs. Marshall.

It was a small valley of broken ground, the banks around almost rising into chalky cliffs, and fringed with old beech trees whose tangled roots hung down from the crumbled edges of the steep bank.

The summer evening sky, so clear, so pale a blue, defined the stems of the trees, and the delicate tracery of the branches, seen like gold in the setting sun.

“It is a beautiful evening, to us common mortals,” said Sir Edward; “but how intensely you must enjoy it.”

“I am afraid I am one of the common mortals,” said Helen; “but I think that this is a beautiful evening, and this a pretty meadow to enjoy it in. There is a clear pool a little farther on, under those walnut trees; it is almost hidden by these stunted hawthorns: there, should you have guessed that there was water here?”

Helen descended a few rugged stone steps, and stood on the mossy brink of a deep clear

well ; the crystal water trembled over the margin. A little fawn broke through the brushwood, and leaped to Helen's side.

“ A pet of mine,” said she, patting the creature's head ; “ a troublesome pet, too, are you not, Leila ? ”

She might have been taken, he thought, for the nymph of the fountain, her head and her white attire so Grecian, and her beauty so calm, so dreamy in its expression, as she stood gazing down into the dark water.

“ What a spot for a poet ! ” he exclaimed.

“ Who is a poet ! ” said Helen, looking up and laughing.

“ Are not you ? ”

“ What, because I have a fawn with a blue ribbon, and call it Leila ? or because I wrote upon the spur of the moment a few verses for which I was particularly well paid ? Believe me, I think far too highly of the craft of which you accuse me, to class myself among its professors on such slight grounds.”

“ We will pass over the fawn if you like, but Cyprian is——.”

“ Oh ! pray don’t talk of it,” said Helen ;
“ do you know, that I have a presentiment that the tea is ready ? ”

“ Will you not let me thank you for the great pleasure your poem has afforded me ? ”

“ No, I had rather that you did not,” said Helen with perfect simplicity.

Helen was right in her conjecture. When they reached the house, they found little Anne enthroned behind the teacups—a woman’s proper empire, as some poor creature somewhere remarked to somebody, and the coffee-service waiting for Helen.

“ We thought you did not intend to come back,” said Colonel Marshall, looking at Sir Edward.

“ What, did you suppose we had fallen into the water ? ” said he, taking a chair by little Anne.

“No, not into *the water*,” said Mrs. Marshall with a mischievous look at Helen.

Helen opened her large hazel eyes, and turned them full on Mrs. Marshall with an expression of wonder. “Was it possible that any one who knew her could think she had been flirting, and with Sir Edward too!”

Mrs. Marshall met her gaze with several of those encouraging glances with which ladies are wont to enliven their young friends when they think there is any prospect of a match being got up.

“Can I do anything to help you?” said Sir Edward to little Anne, who seemed extremely busy with the cups and saucers, without making any actual progress.

“Oh! if you would I should be so glad,” said Anne, with a very imploring look, — “I am always scolded when I make the tea.”

“Who scolds you?”

“Colonel Marshall.”

“Poor child!”

Anne curved up her lip to hear herself called a child ; she was a great deal past sixteen she would have people to know.

And Sir Edward made the tea for her, and whenever she was quite sure of not being observed, she gave Helen a sly pluck by the sleeve, to be interpreted as it best might.

It was the first time Sir Edward would have believed, had any one told him so, that two girls could live quite contented with the pleasures of their own home, without a wish to leave it. He was pleased with the attention and deference they paid their mother, the completely subordinate part they took in the conversation.

He had been used to see girls interrupt and contradict their parents without any ceremony.

The tea was over, and Mrs. Marshall took Anne to the other end of the room, and made her get out her guitar, and sing to them.

Anne was timid, and her voice and fingers

shook when she began, but finding that Sir Edward, of whom she was much afraid, was talking to her mother, she threw out her voice, and sang sweetly.

Then Helen sang a duet with her, and Helen was an accomplished musician, and by no means afraid of Sir Edward, whose praise or blame would have been exactly alike to her. The duet was beautiful, and Colonel Marshall praised it very much.

Sir Edward had been talking to Mrs. Merton all the time, but he had not missed a note.

“Now, Helen!” said Colonel Marshall.

“No more,—I am putting away my music,” she replied.

“Yes, but I thought you were to read to us.”

“And I will, though you have broken your part of the contract. Come to this table, out of everybody’s way, and I will read you a beautiful scene.”

“But,” said the Colonel in a low voice; “I want Sir Edward to hear you.”

“The very thing,” replied Helen, “that I wish to avoid—sit down here, and listen.”

Helen read him the beautiful tale of the nightingale, from the “*Lover’s Melancholy*.” The great sweetness of her voice silenced the talkers at the first word; but she was not aware of this; she went on, making music of every line, till at the close, every one, even Sir Edward, pressed upon her their thanks and applause.

Colonel Marshall took up the book as Helen laid it down, and read the note upon the two last lines.

“ ‘Thou hast discoursed
A truth of mirth and pity.’ ”

‘This is evidently corrupt,’ says Gifford; ‘but I can suggest no remedy. Pathetic, indeed, this most beautiful tale is, but it certainly contains nothing of merriment.’ ”

“Oh! these critics!” cried Helen; “I see no difficulty in the text,—the tale is grotesque, and like many of the old stories hovers between

smiles and tears. I think Menaphon has with exquisite truth described the feeling it causes.

‘It was the quaintest sadness.’” *

All the ladies declared loudly in favour of Prince Palador; he made them discontented with all other lovers.

“One so young and goodly,
So sweet in his own nature, any story
Hath seldom mentioned.”

“What is the distinction between him and Romeo?” asked Mrs. Marshall.

“Oh! the wide distinction between a passion and an affection,” replied Helen. “Romeo hears of Juliet’s death, and instantly takes poison; had he waited a little while, I would lay an even wager that he would have forgotten all about her; and I think Friar Lawrence would take my part,—you know he

* And farther on the expression occurs,

“Here, in the legend of thy two years’ exile
Rare pity and delight are strangely mingled.”

It shows but a scanty knowledge of human emotion to doubt the co-existence of these two feelings.

hinted to Romeo that his love was too violent to last, — but Palador has for two years believed his mistress dead, and still

———‘is the same melancholy man
He was at ’s father’s death—sometimes speaks sense
But seldom mirth—will smile, but seldom laugh’—

a man, and constant for two years ! The character is rather ideal,” continued Helen ; “constant but to the memory of his love. Shakespeare would never have done such a thing : Ford has made a beautiful mistake.”

Sir Edward could not here resist the opportunity of saying that Miss Merton appeared extremely learned in such matters. He was standing behind Helen’s chair ; she made an impatient movement, and then looking haughtily in his face, replied, “that there might be *bliss*, but there was certainly no *credit* in ignorance of any kind.”

The Colonel laughed, and warned Sir Edward that Helen was never at a loss for an answer.

“ I admire one thing in Palador,” said Helen, “ more, even, than his love for fine pictures (a great virtue in a king). He is robbed of his mistress through the base designs of his own father, and how beautifully guarded he is in his expressions, when speaking of the parent who has embittered his whole existence, — as when Rhetias, in recalling to him the past, begins—

‘ You had a father, sir—’

‘ Your sovereign while he lived !’

replies the prince, as an intimation that he will hear no reproaches against him. And again, when the melancholy tale is recounted, his delightful request,

‘ Forget the sadder story of my father,

And only, Rhetias, learn to read me well.’ ”

“ The same noble forbearance is to be remarked in Melander,” said Colonel Marshall.

“ ‘ For his sake,

We will not dig his father’s grave afresh,

Although the mention of him much concerns

The business we inquire of.’ ”—

“ And what rich poetry there is in the scene

where Palador regains Eroclea," continued Helen. "His exclamation—

Tell me what air
Hast thou perfumed, since tyranny first ravished
The contract of our hearts?

Ero. Dear sir, in Athens
Have I been buried.

Pal. Buried? *right.—As I*
In Cyprus!

is one of those sudden and deep touches of feeling in which Ford excels."

"But the whole sentiment of the play — the tone of colour that pervades it, is that of a delicious calm — the very atmosphere of poetry encircles its imaginary world — the repose and dignity of a court such as the elegant Palador must have gathered around him. As in the play of 'As you like it,' everything is in harmony with the dewy turf, and wide-spreading boughs of the forest, so in the Lover's Melancholy there reigns the stately quiet of the lofty palace, the cool marble floors — the subdued sunlight — the vast rooms adorned with all that is most choice and beautiful in Grecian

art — made present to you through the medium of the graceful beings that the poet has created fit only for such abodes.”

As Helen spoke in a very low tone of voice, and leaning on the table, addressed herself solely to Colonel Marshall, who always encouraged her to talk to him on such matters, she acquitted herself of all pedantry in expressing her feelings so much at length, although Sir Edward would listen to all she said. It was his own fault, and he could justly throw no blame on her.”

“ Now, Helen, let me give you some strawberries,” said Colonel Marshall ; “ I am sure you have earned them.”

“ Thank you, I will help myself to some, and Gertrude to some cake ; I never saw the tray come in.”

“ No,” said Gertrude, “ you two always flirt so scandalously when you get over a book.”

“ Downs,” said Anne, addressing him, as he was arranging the decanters, “ pray what did the bell ring for about five minutes ago ?”

Downs, with a quaint smile, said, "That a box had come by the coach for Miss Helen."

"A box! oh! what was in it?" said Anne.

"I don't know, Miss," replied Downs, in his leisurely manner; "it was too heavy for dresses, or else it was like the box you are always so glad to see, that comes from your milliner's in London."

Anne blushed and laughed at this charge, and then asked, "why Downs had not brought in the box?"

"Because," he said, "he knew Miss Helen was not a curious young lady, and he thought she would prefer waiting until she was alone."

"But I can't wait, if Helen can," cried Anne; "Colonel Marshall won't mind it, I am sure, nor Mrs. Marshall, nor mamma, nor—" she did not venture to appeal directly to Sir Edward, but she glanced timidly at him and was silent.

"I am sure," said he, "I shall be delighted at anything that gives you pleasure."

Anne's eyes sparkled ; Helen did not like his speech — she saw that he meant nothing, and that her sister thought he meant a great deal.

“ I know what it is,” said Helen, as soon as the box came in, “ you need not open it.”

Downs stood with the chisel in his hand, waiting for orders.

Colonel Marshall told a story of a young lady at a house where he was staying, who had a mysterious parcel brought to her one evening, and no one could prevail on her to open it, until one of her brothers took forcible possession of it, and disclosed to the curious guests—a little pair of corduroy shorts — which she, in her benevolence had purchased for some little charity boy : now they would see if Helen's box contained anything equally amusing.”

“ It is only my bust,” said Helen ; “ we left it with a friend in town until we should be quite settled here.”

The box was hastily opened, and the bust lifted out.

It was an exquisite piece of workmanship, of a girl much younger than Helen now looked — but with her faultless features and calm expression.

They looked silently at it for some time. Helen as admiringly as the rest: as if it was something quite unconnected with herself.

At last Sir Edward asked her if she thought it like.

“The features are like,” she said; “but inspired by the artist: there are no modern faces with that expression.”

Sir Edward wished to know what Helen meant.

It is so fatiguing to have to explain everything one says. “I have never met, in modern faces,” said Helen, “with that expression of pure intellect, and perfect simplicity, which is so often found in the antique — and naturally — for our education and mode of life is so opposed to theirs: the mind is always on the fret in these days, which is enough to spoil any countenance.”

He said that Miss Merton did herself injustice by the remark.

Helen merely looked at him to see if he spoke ironically, and finding that he appeared in earnest she moved quietly away.

“ But pray who modelled this unparalleled bust ? ” said Colonel Marshall.

“ A sculptor at Vienna named Steinberg,” said Mrs. Merton ; “ we had a letter of introduction to him, and Mr. Merton was so delighted with his works, that he employed him to take that bust of Helen.”

“ Well this is the strangest coincidence in the world,” said the Colonel ; “ I know the man ; that is, I do not know him yet, but I am expecting him here every day— he is a relation of mine.”

“ Is he ? oh ! is he coming ? ” cried little Anne, clasping her hands ; “ oh ! how well I recollect him ; don’t you, Helen ? ”

“ Where is Helen ? ” said Colonel Marshall, turning round.

She was leaning by the window as pale as death.

“Do you recollect this M. Steinberg?” asked Colonel Marshall.

“How should I forget him? My father was with me,” said she in a low voice.

He saw that she was deeply affected, and he addressed himself to Mrs. Merton. He told her how this M. Steinberg had offended his relations by turning sculptor; but that his passion for the art had overcome all other considerations — a passion fully justified by his subsequent success; that lately some baron, distantly related to him, had died, leaving him heir to his title and property; and that he had dropped the chisel, the Colonel understood, and was making his way over to England.”

“I am sorry to hear it,” said Mrs. Merton; “there is an end to his fame, and he promised great things if my remembrance of four years ago may be trusted.”

“But he will never want a dinner now,”

said the Colonel, "which perhaps on the whole is a better thing."

"Unless he is greatly altered," said Helen, "I think he would gladly want many dinners for the hope of future greatness."

"Well, we shall see what he means to do with himself," said the Colonel. "It is odd I should know nothing about him; but I have been so much in India that I was hardly conscious that I possessed this treasure of a nephew — my sister married his father, and both have long been dead, so the boy is not much of a relation to me after all. Now, Gertrude, we must be going."

"Talking of flirting, look there," said Mrs. Marshall, as she rose.

Little Anne and Sir Edward Falconer were gathering jessamines out of the window at the other end of the room — then he took her cluster away, and gave her his in return; and then they showed each other the moon.

"This is all very pretty," said Colonel Mar-

shall, coming up to them ; but the best friends must part — it is near eleven, and this child” (patting Anne on the head,) “ ought to have been in bed an hour ago.”

Anne slyly dropped her jessamines into the flower-bed ; and then drawing herself up, she assured Colonel Marshall that she often sat up till twelve o’clock, and that she was not sleepy in the least.

“ I wonder what can induce Sir Edward Falconer to mix in the society of a village,” said Helen to her sister as they went up to their own room — his rank would entitle him to move in much better society I should think.”

“ I heard Colonel Marshall tell mamma that he goes into no society at all,” said Anne ; “ he does not like society — he is half a misanthrope.”

“ Indeed ! very creditable — though if he judges of other men by himself, I don’t wonder that he finds little inducement to seek their company.”

“What severe things you can say, Helen ; but do you know he has never been into any house except Colonel Marshall’s, until he came here this evening.”

“Did not he dine at the Claptons ?”

“Oh ! no,” said little Anne ; “they told us they asked him, but they forgot to say that he refused them. I suppose he will only visit such people as the De Burghs, and the man in the great white house, Mr. Saville — and — us sometimes,” said Anne, peeping slyly into her sister’s face. “I wonder what you were talking about all that time in the meadow.”

Helen repeated all she could remember of the few words that had passed between them.

“Oh ! that was all ; but still that is ten times more than he would have said to any other woman. I heard what Colonel Marshall said — I heard.”—

Helen let down her hair, and began to arrange it for the night, without asking what her sister had heard.

“ I don’t see why you should dislike him,” pursued Anne ; “ I am sure there is something about his manner very distinguished.”

“ In short, dear Anne,” said Helen, “ you have a mind to see me mistress of Falcon House. It will not do.”

“ No, I declare,” said Anne, colouring.

“ I wonder why he condescends to visit the Marshalls with his airs,” said Helen ; “ I have often heard Colonel Marshall boast that he carved out his own fortunes.”

“ Oh ! Sir Edward’s father was a great friend of Colonel Marshall ; they went through the war together, or some such thing ; he will put up with more from Colonel Marshall than from any one.”

“ Put up !” exclaimed Helen, “ who, or what is he, that people should be more forbearing towards him than towards others ? On my word, men are so humoured now-a-days, their wishes so consulted, that they find it a vast effort to support anything that does not

exactly meet their inclinations. They should put up with a very great deal, if I had anything to do with them."

"Yes," said Anne laughing, "Mamma often says you have such a spirit that the gentlemen are all afraid of you. But oh! I am so glad that Eric Steinberg is coming. He is so clever, and so gentle, and so handsome too. I recollect he used to make me little rabbits out of the clay, to play with, while he modelled you; and he had such a nice studio. I am very glad he is rich. I hope he will stay here a long time; don't you, Helen?"

Helen was sitting with her arm on her toilet-table, and her head resting on her hand.

"My dear Anne," she said, "I am very tired to-night, and I don't know why—come, let us go to bed—oh! yes, it is a beautiful night, but I am too sleepy to look at the moon."

"Dear me, but Helen," said Anne, "I never said one word about the moon. I was

thinking of Mr. Steinberg ; although, I think Sir Edward is more distinguished in his manner—more reserved. Mr. Steinberg was so very natural ; I allow he is not so handsome as Mr. Steinberg, but then I think that beauty is all nonsense for a man ; and, bless me,” cried little Anne, recollecting herself, “ there is Helen saying her prayers, and I never knew it. My goodness, how shocked I am ! ”

CHAPTER V.

Take no repulse, whatever she doth say.

SHAKESPEARE.

Look! what a wardrobe here is for thee.

IBID.

LADY DE BURGH and her daughter were sitting in their boudoir when Helen's note was brought in.

"Well, Mamma, and when does she come?"

"She declines."

"Is that possible? A native?" said Miss de Burgh, with as much surprise as her well-bred indifference could display.

"And now what are we to do?" said her mother.

"Ask somebody else."

"But there is no one in our own set whom I could ask to take the second character in our

tableaux, and no one among these country people who could look it decently : you must give up *tableaux*."

"That I am determined I will not," said Miss de Burgh. "Lord Stanmore is so extremely fond of *tableaux*."

"I cannot think what he does out of town at this time," said her mother.

"Nor what we do," returned Miss de Burgh ; "two months in London, and not the best two months neither."

"It is your poor father, my dear."

One would have supposed from this ejaculation, that Sir Clement de Burgh was dead at least ; but he was far more to be pitied — dead to the delights of the throng, and expense and debasement of a London season.

"Lord Stanmore dislikes being in town," said Miss de Burgh ; "he has some foolish romantic notions which I shall cure him of."

There is such a proverb as "counting your chickens," &c. but it was far too vulgar

for Lady de Burgh to apply to her daughter even if she remembered it.

“ I don’t know about these *tableaux*,” pursued her ladyship; “ why must we have the ‘ Talisman?’ could not you illustrate some other work of Scott’s?”

“ No, because Lord Stanmore said what beautiful groups might be formed from the ‘ Talisman;’ and he said he should like to represent Sir Kenneth, provided I was the Edith.”

“ Did he? — that was marked certainly,” said Lady de Burgh with great satisfaction. “ Perhaps, after all, Miss Fanshawe might undertake Berengaria.”

“ I hope she will not, for though her face is not seen (I took care of that) in the two first *tableaux*, yet she has a fine figure, and would look so very well kneeling. I want some shy, awkward girl to be a foil to me. Miss Fanshawe has a neck and shoulders like Vestris.”

“ Miss Merton is very pretty.”

“ That is of no importance; she can have

no *tournure*, no knowledge of society. What does a mere pretty face ever effect ? ”

“ Great conquests sometimes,” said Lady de Burgh ; “ but you have no occasion to fear anything from Miss Merton, as you see she will not come.”

“ What perfect madness,” cried Miss de Burgh, “ to neglect such an opportunity of seeing a little good society.”

Certainly it was very mad to refrain from exposing her graceful intellect to the sneering undisguised rudeness with which she would have been treated by these persons, her inferiors in every good thing.

“ We cannot do without her ; you must call and press the invitation ; get the Marshalls to take you. She cannot refuse you, if you manage properly.”

“ And then, Frederic,” said Lady de Burgh, in a state of great uncertainty.

“ Oh ! pray think better of Frederic than to suppose he would fall in love with an angel,

unless she was very well endowed," said Miss de Burgh, with some degree of pride in her tone and manner.

"Well, I hope so," returned her mother; "and, my love, take care that you wear your fawn-coloured satin to-morrow: it is remarkably becoming to you."

"I mean to wear that pale-figured silk," said her daughter, languidly? "blue suits my complexion."

"Now don't be obstinate," said Lady de Burgh, "that blue never did fit you; I told you so before we left town: you ought to have seen Chevalier about it."

"I wore it once, and everybody admired it extremely," replied Miss de Burgh.

After a few more words, and rather warm ones, Lady de Burgh consented that her daughter should decorate herself after her own fancy; well convinced that she could not be more anxious to marry her daughter, than the daughter was to marry herself.

But it so happened that before the carriage came round to the door to take her to Mrs. Marshall's, Lady de Burgh recollected that Mrs. Merton had been a schoolfellow of hers. This greatly facilitated matters; there was so much to be said about old friendships reviving in their children (the revival to last as long as any use could be made of it, understood of course).

It so chanced that Mrs. Merton was in the room when Lady de Burgh arrived. This was delightful; she entreated to be introduced, and then fell into her prepared vein of sentiment. She talked of those happy days at dear Miss Hammond's; about childhood and the lapse of years, and then came gently down to the present time. She had long settled to importune her friend Mrs. Marshall to take her to Mrs. Merton's charming cottage, her sweet daughters would be such an acquisition to Miss de Burgh; she had heard of their beauty, she had heard of their accomplish-

ments; in short, there seemed nothing connected with them that she had not heard of; and when she paused after her condescending efforts, she was astonished that Mrs. Merton retained her previous self-possession, and found a very few well-chosen words to reply to all her eloquence.

However, by degrees she opened upon her mission, and with great skill and earnestness combated all Mrs. Merton's objections. Had she any scruples with respect to *tableaux*?— Did she think them too theatrical?— They had guarded against that; there was no speaking, — simply pictures represented; Mrs. Merton must not confuse them even with the charades which were so much in vogue, there was not the slightest attempt at acting.

Mrs. Merton smiled, and thought of the scrupulous lady who defended her daughter's singing, on the plea that it was performed with her back to the company.

She replied that she very much admired

tableaux, and thought them the prettiest way of amusing young people that had been thought of for some time. With regard to publicity, no young person ever entered a ball-room, without being so much the object of general attention, that to be consistent, no one permitting their daughters to dance, could well refuse their appearing in *tableaux*: but that Helen had not the honour of knowing Lady de Burgh, and therefore was naturally reluctant to accept her very flattering invitation.

Then Lady de Burgh called in the assistance of Colonel and Mrs. Marshall to overcome this objection. She would call on Miss Merton; they should become acquainted, that should not be an obstacle. So eager was she for her own purposes, to gain admission to a person, whom she would be unable to recollect if she met her in the street a month afterwards. However, in the end, she gained her point. Mrs. Merton promised that Helen

should accept the invitation, provided she had no reluctance to do so herself.

Lady de Burgh said, on taking leave, that as Miss Merton would oblige her by accepting a character, she begged to have the pleasure of dressing her for it; and after fixing the day on which Helen was to go to them, she departed with a profusion of thanks.

“That evening Mrs. Marshall came down to the Mertons’ in a great hurry, to say that she had a perfect wardrobe of fancy dresses, any of which were at Helen’s service — because, my dear,” she added, “Lady de Burgh is a delightful woman, up to a certain point, but when her daughter is concerned, you understand” —

“Yes, I understand,” said Helen laughing; “but dear Gertrude, I don’t wish to interfere with Miss de Burgh’s claims.”

“Hear her!” said Mrs. Marshall; “was there ever such a heroine? — oh! no, you don’t care how you dress, although they have the young Lord Stanmore staying in the house; not you!”

“Not a bit the more because they have a lord anybody in the house.”

“His father is one of the richest earls in the country,” pursued Mrs. Marshall.

“Very likely,” replied Helen, composedly going on with her work.

“Tiresome girl, that you are,” cried Mrs. Marshall; “there is no pleasure in planning for you. I suppose you are one of those magnanimous people who think lords are just like other men.”

“No,” said Helen; “I think they must of necessity be rather different from other men; for they hold a different position in society, and it would be very odd if that did not have some influence over their characters and manners.”

“Good or bad?” asked Mrs. Marshall.

“Good, as regards manner,” said Helen; “you know that travellers say an English gentleman comes very near to a North American Indian, which is a most flattering compari-

son, and lords, or people who are among lords, set the fashion in manner. Not that I admire affectation; only, if people must affect something, it had better be as quiet as possible."

"Very true," said Mrs. Marshall; "and now let us think about your dress."

So the robes were determined, to the satisfaction of all parties; and Mrs. Marshall took her leave, promising to send them up to Helen the next day.

Mrs. Merton advised her to order a new dinner-dress for her visit, which she begged to decline doing. She went to act their *tableaux*, and they might be contented with her as she was. She should wear her white muslin dresses;—she did not think the whole party worth a new dress, and it was the only proof she could give that she did not wish to captivate whoever might be in the house, and so, on the appointed day, she took leave of her mother and Anne, and was driven by Colonel Marshall to Lady de Burgh's.

CHAPTER VI.

Leon.—You may ask,
As well, what any gentleman has to do
With civil courtesy.

MASSINGER.

HELEN arrived at Lady de Burgh's just in time to dress for dinner. Her ladyship received her very kindly, and introduced her to Miss Burgh, who welcomed her with a cold politeness not very cheering to a young girl coming to a strange house, and among people her superiors in rank.

Laura de Burgh was elaborately dressed, and looked high-bred, and handsome — not beautiful; — for *beauty* may exist without mind, but never without heart. Her com-

plexion had the creamy tint of a marble statue—her hair and eyes very dark—her figure tall and slight. She was looking over some prints for attitudes.

Lady de Burgh said she would leave the young people together to become acquainted.

As soon as she had left the room, Laura de Burgh turned, and carefully surveying Helen's silk pelisse and straw bonnet, said coldly—

“ Had you not better dress for dinner ? ”

“ If you please,” said Helen.

Miss de Burgh then rang for some one to show Helen to her room.

Helen dressed alone, and very quickly. She put on a plain India muslin dress made up to the throat, with long sleeves,—her hair braided, as usual, close round her head.

She did not quite like going down stairs alone, and she did not recollect the way to the drawing-room. She was always stupid in finding her way about new houses.

Three or four young men were lounging in the hall through which she had to pass.

They all stared at her extremely,—so much so, that one would have thought they could have perceived her painful embarrassment. But of course, in that case they would have left off directly —so they were every one sadly near-sighted.

“What a pretty quakeress!” said one, with a very strong oath, but speaking in a languid voice —just as she reached the foot of the stairs.

“Who is she?” drawled another.

“I rather think it is a Miss Merton,” said the first.

“No!”

“Shall I ask her?” said number one, still more faintly.

Here the two gentlemen laughed together in a whisper. The third, who by fixing his glass in his eye, was enabled to perceive that Helen blushed deeply, and moreover, was

quite uncertain which way to go, crossed the hall hastily, and throwing open one of the doors, said to her, "this is the drawing-room."

Helen bowed gratefully, and he followed her in.

Miss de Burgh looked up as Helen entered.

"Have you ever read the 'Talisman?'" asked Miss de Burgh.

"Yes, many times," replied Helen.

"Indeed!" said Laura de Burgh; "have you read any other of Scott's novels?"

"Yes," replied Helen, without descending to particulars.

"Do you know French?" asked Miss de Burgh.

"Certainly," said Helen with a look of surprise.

"And Italian?"

"Yes."

"What works have you read in Italian?" continued Miss de Burgh.

Helen stared, and had half a mind to make no answer; but she thought she had better say something, so she began chronologically. "The works of Dante, Pulci, and Petrarch, Filicaja, Tasso, Davila, Lanzi, Alfieri, Pellico, Manzoni, and I think I had better add an &c." said Helen, "as a catalogue of names cannot be very interesting to you."

"Will you introduce me to your friend?" said the gentleman who had followed Helen.

Miss de Burgh raised her eyebrows, and said carelessly, — "Miss Merton—Lord Stanmore."

Lord Stanmore, who had seemed much amused with Helen's list of books, asked her if she had met with a modern Italian poem, describing the day's occupation of a coxcomb. Helen had seen it, but she thought it infinitely stupid, — the idea of devoting more than a page to *such* a topic.

Lord Stanmore laughed — Miss de Burgh, turning her back upon Helen, began to con-

verse with him about some prints which were to be used in the *tableaux*.

“Miss Merton,” said Lord Stanmore, moving back his chair; “you have an interest in this subject,—pray give us your advice.”

Miss de Burgh immediately became quite silent.

The two or three other gentlemen now came into the room. One of them was presented to Helen as Mr. de Burgh—the Saladin, she was informed, of the *tableaux*. She looked at him; he was thin enough — that seemed his best qualification.

A Mr. Tom Saville, who possessed a very abundant crop of stiff light hair, which grew half way down his forehead, was to represent Richard.

The young men came round Miss de Burgh’s chair and began talking of a new sort of dress that ladies were then wearing very much in London.

One man did not like it for ball dresses, but

thought it would make up very well for dinner dresses.

Her brother, with a great oath, which Miss de Burgh called naughty, said, "That these dresses were all the fashion for balls, and that a woman had better be in a place not mentionable to ears polite, than not be in the fashion."

Laura de Burgh said, she had ordered one of these dresses, (which was not true, but who minds truth in trifles?) and she intended "to wear it of a morning."

Helen was obliged to confess, when she was appealed to, that she had not seen a dress of the kind.

A young man who could not speak articulately from conceit, and who was leaning over Miss de Burgh's chair, attempted to inform her that Helen was *very green*, which amused de Burgh exceedingly.

"Were you ever in town?" asked Miss de Burgh, surveying Helen with a scornful smile.

"Oh yes," said Helen.

“ In what part of town did you reside ? ”

“ In a place called Russell Square,” said Helen ; “ but I should despair of making you comprehend whereabouts that is.”

“ I haven’t the least idea,” said Laura de Burgh.

“ I know it well,” said Lord Stanmore ; “ I have two or three friends living there. But Miss Merton, will you not come and see the theatre ? ”

“ There will be hardly time,” said Laura de Burgh, trying to look gentle.

“ Oh ! plenty of time,” said her brother. Time was plentiful with him to judge of the quantity he wasted upon every sentence.

So being again pressed by Lord Stanmore, Helen went with him to see the theatre, as he called it. He goodnaturedly showed her the contrivances for lighting the *tableaux*, the gauze curtain, and all that was to be seen,—and then asked her how she intended to dress Berengaria. She described her costume. Lord Stanmore

asked her with a smile, if she thought it a becoming dress. Helen really did not know ; she understood that it was historic, which was the great point.

“ Miss de Burgh,” said Lord Stanmore, “ has ordered, she tells me, a pink satin court-dress, for Edith.”

Helen smiled, and Lord Stanmore said no more, leaving her to form her own conclusions as to the motive which dictated Miss de Burgh’s choice.

As they were returning to the drawing-room, they met a servant despatched to them by Miss de Burgh to tell them that dinner was ready ; upon which Lord Stanmore giving Helen his arm, advised that they should fall into the procession as it came across the hall, to the great discomposure of Miss de Burgh. While the ladies were taking coffee, the gentlemen joined them. They were impatient for a rehearsal. Helen for the first time felt rather frightened,—she had nothing in common with the people around her.

“Frederic!” whispered Miss de Burgh to her brother, “what do you think of her?”

“Oh! she will never do — far too quiet,” he replied.

Miss de Burgh took courage. Helen had looked so beautiful in her fright, that she had been quite alarmed.

“Allow me, Miss Merton,” said Mr. de Burgh, languidly: “Lord Stanmore, will you take Edith?”

Laura felt grateful to her brother for his consideration. He was, indeed, anxious that his sister should marry Lord Stanmore, for he was supposed to have as fine preserves as any man in England — his pheasants were capital.

Mr. Tom Saville was standing behind the scenes with Miss de Burgh. Lady de Burgh was sitting in an arm-chair on the stage.

“Oh! don’t let us have any one at rehearsal,” said Mr. Saville; “it is such a bore.”

“No; I’ll tell mamma,” said Miss de Burgh, coming on the stage.

Helen was very much annoyed at the idea of being left alone with these strangers. Lady de Burgh seemed something like a protection to her. Her feelings always found their way to her face, and Lord Stanmore, who was watching her, instantly interpreted her expression.

“Oh! Lady de Burgh!” he said, coming up to her, “don’t think of going away. I, for one, shall not do half so well if you are not here to applaud me: and we mean to decide upon all our groups to-night, so we shall want your opinion.”

Lady de Burgh was flattered by this appeal to her judgment, and remained.

The pictures were formed, and highly commended. Helen found that they were so arranged, that her face was only once seen by the audience, and then partially. This gave her not a moment’s annoyance. But as her figure happened to be particularly fine, this circumstance was not quite so satisfactory to Laura de Burgh, as she had intended it to be.

“ There is a difference,” said Lord Stanmore to Helen, “ between being fond of *tableaux*, and fond of showing one’s self. Now, some of these people have no thought beyond putting up themselves and their dresses to be looked at; but this is not your case, or you would not have taken so quietly that clever arrangement of Miss de Burgh’s.”

Helen never affected to misunderstand things that she understood; and therefore she merely said that she was quite willing to be useful in whatever way was most agreeable to Miss de Burgh.

“ I declare,” said Lord Stanmore, pretending to walk lame as he crossed the stage, “ I am quite crippled with kneeling to the Lady Edith—four *tableaux* am I doomed to undergo on my knees—she is really an unconscionable person.”

Helen laughed. Then Lord Stanmore began a conversation with Helen upon historic painting, and the use that might be made of *tableaux*

as a means of illustrating the great principles of composition, of which all persons but artists are at present ignorant."

Helen, who had been so quiet, so silent before, now lighted up — her colour rose — she conversed with animation; and her remarks showed the extent and variety of her reading; above all, there was an accuracy, a truth in her mode of expression, which is never met with in fashionable life."

Miss de Burgh was amusing herself by ridiculing Helen to Mr. Tom Saville to the best of her abilities.

"How very absurd to see how she excites herself. What are they talking about?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Saville—"some old quiz — Shakspeare — or somebody."

"One would think she was acting," said Miss de Burgh; "how very *odd*!"

"It would be all very well if the girl was pretty," said Mr. Saville; "but really, as it is — shall I go and ask her if she is acting with Stanmore."

Now, Mr. Saville dared not have addressed Lord Stanmore by his name, but it sounded very fine to speak of him in this way to a woman.

“ Oh, do ! ” said Miss de Burgh, laughing behind her fan.

Mr. Saville then walked up to Helen, and said that he was deputed to ask if she was acting a scene with Lord Stanmore — in which case they would gladly be audience.

Lord Stanmore stopped short, and gave the coxcomb such a look, that he stole back again to Miss de Burgh without waiting for an answer.

Then his Lordship offered Helen his arm to return to the drawing-room, and continued his conversation with her, while Miss de Burgh and Mr. Tom Saville sang duets together, very much out of tune.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Was ever woman in this humour wooed ?
Was ever woman in this humour won ?

SHAKSPEARE.

O lord, per se, lord ! quintessence of honour ; she
walks not under a weed, that could deny thee anything.

MASSINGER.

THE young people were in the library amusing
themselves in various ways until luncheon time.

Miss de Burgh seemed very busy with her
worsted work, but she contrived to keep up a
sentimental conversation with Mr. Tom Saville,
who was lounging on a couch behind her, and
a teasing gossip with Helen, who immersed in
a new book, would very gladly have been let
alone.

Lord Stanmore was scanning half a dozen
newspapers with great eagerness.

“Is your lordship a politician?” said Miss de Burgh.

“A very keen one,” he replied.

Miss de Burgh wondered, and said she always had wondered what men could find to interest them in those stupid politics. She had an idea that gentlemen disliked women who had any political opinions.

“I don’t think this is the case with clever men, if the ladies’ opinions coincide exactly with their own.”

So Miss de Burgh’s brother told her gracefully: that was all she knew about it!

And to show how much *he* knew about it, he asked Lord Stanmore if there was anything doing in the House?

“Too much by half,” he replied, throwing down one paper, and snatching up another in great haste.

“What, in Heaven’s name! anything about the Game Laws?” asked Mr. de Burgh, really interested.

“ No — Ballot,” said Lord Stanmore, reading on.

Mr. de Burgh yawned and dropped back into his chair.

“ When do you mean to go to Parliament ? ” asked Miss de Burgh.

“ Very shortly,” replied Lord Stanmore.

“ I suppose you are sure to be returned for C—— if you stand ? ” said Miss de Burgh.

“ Pretty sure,” he replied.

“ I dare say you will be glad enough to get into the House of Lords, the Commons is so vulgar now,” said Mr. Tom Saville.

This was a very bright remark, as that event could only take place by the death of Lord Prescott, Lord Stanmore’s father.

Lord Stanmore, whose feelings were not quite blunt enough for his station, started and changed colour, but he made no reply, and resumed his reading.

“ And pray,” said Miss de Burgh to Helen, “ what do you think of our new neighbour, Sir Edward Falconer ? ”

Helen did not like to say what she really thought of him to strangers, and she looked very much confused. Of course there was only one way of interpreting her confusion.

“ I never knew such an unsociable person,” said Miss de Burgh, “ though perhaps he is not so to you : “ he is very much at your house, is he not ? ”

“ He comes sometimes to see mamma,” said Helen, blushing as she found everybody looking at her.

“ Oh ! to see mamma ! ” repeated Miss de Burgh ; “ nobody else ? ”

“ I really don’t know — he divides his attention very much between mamma and the gold fish.”

“ Do you know any thing of Mrs. Falconer ? ” asked Lord Stanmore, coming over to Helen’s side of the room.

“ My Lord ! ” exclaimed Miss de Burgh, “ that tiresome door never will shut close, which makes such a terrible draught just

by the window — you had better not sit there.”

“ Thank you, I like a draught ; it is so cool,” he replied.

Helen, in reply to his question, said, “ That she knew nothing of Mrs. Falconer — they did not visit the Falconers — Sir Edward had been introduced to them by the Marshalls ; and, like other idle men, when he was distracted for want of something to do, he was good enough to come and interrupt the busy people of his acquaintance.”

Lord Stanmore thought that Helen would like Mrs. Falconer, but she was a person who ought to be known to be appreciated : her manners were cold at first, but to those she liked, she was peculiarly attractive, and there was something gratifying in the kindness that was not equally diffused among all her acquaintance.

Helen entirely coincided in this last remark.

“ She has given me more good advice,” added Lord Stanmore, “ than any one in the

world — by good advice, I mean advice that you can receive without being exasperated.”

“ Mrs. Falconer has achieved the impossible,” said Helen.

“ And there is an accuracy in her mind,” he continued, “ that is very delightful and uncommon. Many people never tell the truth, not so much from a desire to be false, as from a slovenly habit of mind which prevents their thinking clearly upon any subject. But Mrs. Falconer has a mind of fine original quality, and finely educated. You ought to know her — for there would be between you the bond of sympathy.”

Helen blushed at the implied compliment, and Lord Stanmore changed the subject.

“ I wonder whether we mean to be very frightened to-morrow night,” he said, looking round.

“ I am sure I feel quite nervous already,” said Miss de Burgh, “ the idea of appearing before so many people.”

“It is your own look out, at any rate, Laura,” said her accomplished brother.

“Of course — I only meant,” said Miss de Burgh, finishing the sentence by an elaborate display of her embroidered handkerchief.

“Here come the letters,” said Mr. de Burgh, with a formidable oath. It was the oddest thing to hear him utter all sorts of bad language in an expiring voice.

There was a note for Helen from little Anne, merely saying that her mamma had received tickets for the *tableaux*, and she was coming, and was “so glad!”

“What an interesting correspondent you seem to have! I wish I had one half as interesting,” said Miss de Burgh, with her usual expression of irony.

“It is from my sister,” said Helen, twisting up the note, “and therefore not interesting in the usual sense of the word.”

There is such a thing as affecting not to

understand disagreeable speeches; but Helen took them to pieces, and by that means sadly disconcerted the speechmakers.

“ I was thinking what an *elegant* correspondent you had,” said Lord Stanmore; “ such a pretty little note; and such a pretty handwriting the direction seemed to bear; but we can be at no loss to imagine that the sister of Miss Merton is an elegant woman.”

“ Is your sister pretty?” said Miss de Burgh, sharply, for her temper was fast giving way.

“ I think her so,” replied Helen; “ I have been wishing that she had been invited to represent Berengaria instead of me — she would look it, which I do not.”

Miss de Burgh wished so too, with all her heart.

Some of the party were going to ride after luncheon, and as they were leaving the room to dress, Lord Stanmore stepped back, and asked Helen if she was going to join the riding party.

“No,” said Helen.

“And why not?”

“For two reasons,” said she; “first, I was not asked; and the next, I should be afraid.”

“No, is it possible? I should not have fancied you a timid person,” said Lord Stanmore.

“Not if there is any end to be gained by being bold,” said Helen; “but there would be no use in running the risk of being thrown, a fate which my awkwardness would deserve, even if I escaped it.”

“But why need we all ride?” said Lord Stanmore. “If Miss de Burgh and Mr. Saville wish to go down to the Abbey, we need not keep them at home; but some of us can walk across the park to show Miss Merton the little temple in the valley. I have not seen it since there was the stained glass window put in.”

Helen seemed very well pleased with this arrangement, and a young man, who found her worth talking to, since Lord Stanmore

took notice of her, said that he was sure she would be pleased with the temple—it was such a capital place to smoke in, out of everybody's way.

Miss de Burgh was aghast—her new cap and habit, ordered on purpose to dazzle Lord Stanmore, would be of no use, unless he rode with her to-morrow—there was no hope in that—so she tried to preserve her temper before him, and left the room with a tolerable grace.

She happened to be going upstairs with Helen, and finding it impossible to restrain her feelings entirely, she turned to her with a bitter laugh, and asked her how she liked Lord Stanmore.

“As much as I ever like perfect strangers,” replied Helen.

“Don't you think him the very essence of politeness?” demanded Miss de Burgh.

“He has been very courteous to me,” replied Helen.

“Oh! more than courteous,” exclaimed Miss de Burgh.

“ I think not,” replied Helen; “ it was very natural that as I was inferior in station to everybody else, a well bred man should try to make me forget the difference — this, in my eyes, is no more than courtesy.”

How a little plain speaking does astonish people ! Miss de Burgh found that her usual weapon, irony, would avail her nothing against Helen, so she left her abruptly, and went into her mother’s dressing-room.

“ Going out riding, my dear ? ” said Lady de Burgh, without looking up from the note she was writing.

Miss de Burgh, instead of replying directly, began to abuse Lord Stanmore. She thought him insufferable — rude, ignorant — he was far less a gentleman than his own groom.

“ Why, how you talk, my dear,” said her mother, quietly sealing — “ the young man will be Lord Prescott, with a splendid property.”

Miss de Burgh, in a new vein of sentiment, declared that wealth could not atone for a want

of congeniality in sentiments and hearts; and assured her mother that her sense of honour would not permit her to encourage Lord Stanmore in her present state of feelings.

“ I understand how it is,” said Lady de Burgh, after a pause; “ Lord Stanmore, instead of devoting himself to you, has been amusing himself with the very pretty Miss Merton. I warned you of it.”

Miss de Burgh denied this, but expressed herself very anxious that the *tableaux* should not be performed—she did not feel herself equal to the excitement.

“ Really, my dear,” said her mother, “ after all the expense and trouble.”

“ Expense !” retorted Miss de Burgh.

“ A party invited, and everything prepared for their entertainment.”

“ Yes, a party !” exclaimed Miss de Burgh; “ to see me eclipsed by that vulgar pedantic girl, with her French assurance—a creature only fit for a waiting woman! and Lord Stan-

more dwelling on every word she utters; but I'll not bear it !”

These words were followed by a violent burst of tears.

“ Really, Laura,” said Lady de Burgh, “this is too absurd; everything has been done at your own suggestion, and if your plans have not succeeded to your wishes, you must blame yourself.”

“ How could I tell that she was pretty !” exclaimed Miss de Burgh, passionately :—“ not that I think her so, — but her vulgar face pleases Lord Stanmore, who is incapable of admiring anything more refined ;—but no matter !”

“ Laura,” said Lady de Burgh, impressively, “ if you wish to outshine Miss Merton, I should advise you to dry your eyes — you look already quite hideous from crying. I cannot blame your folly enough; and recollect, that Lord Stanmore being himself a good-tempered person, will be completely disgusted at such a display of passion.”

Miss de Burgh made no reply to this, but she went to her own room and dressed for her ride.

When Helen returned to the library she found it occupied by morning visitors, and Lord Stanmore was conversing with much attention with a very handsome woman, rather past the prime of life, whom he immediately introduced to her as Mrs. Falconer.

Helen was surprised and pleased at being made known to this lady so soon after she had heard of her fine qualities, but she felt rather embarrassed under her piercing gaze, when she recollected how frequently Sir Edward had been at their house, and the very natural conclusions that his mother might draw from the fact.

But Mrs. Falconer was far from being one of those women who think there is but one acceptable subject to young girls; she utterly disdained the vulgar jests and insinuations respecting loves and marriages which form the staple commodity of some people's discourse. She

began to talk with Helen about Mrs. Marshall's little girl, and wished to know if a remarkable talent for music which she had discovered almost in her cradle, was likely to increase, or to continue. "I hope," she said, "that Mrs. Marshall will have her child thoroughly instructed in the art, and then instead of an *accomplishment*, music will prove to her a rational and beautiful resource. I know by report," she added, with a smile, "that Miss Merton's proficiency is an illustration of my remark."

"Oh! Mrs. Marshall is so indulgent in her opinion of her friends," said Helen.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Falconer, "but I heard of your musical abilities through my son, who is not in general a very lenient judge."

"I did not know that Sir Edward Falconer had ever heard me play," said Helen.

"No! Have not you sung several times when he has been present?"

"Yes, but one so often sings before gentlemen without their hearing a note."

“Do *you*?” asked Mrs. Falconer, with a smile shining in her black eyes.

“Oh ! yes,” replied Helen, naturally.

Helen was quite sorry when Lord Stanmore told Mrs. Falconer that they were going out walking, and that he was obliged to wish her good morning.

“I suppose,” said she, “I shall see you before you leave this part of the country. Where are you going next?”

“To Paris.”

“Paris; what is the use of going to Paris?” said Mrs. Falconer, quickly.

Lord Stanmore laughed, and said, that he wanted to buy a snuff-box; besides, his sister was there.

“Oh ! that was a reason undoubtedly,” Mrs. Falconer said; then turning to Helen, with her brilliant smile, “she hoped that some day she might have the pleasure of meeting her again.”

“You come to the *tableaux*, surely?” said Lady de Burgh.

“ I do not know,” she replied. “ I cannot answer for myself from one day to another. I am a martyr to rheumatism, Miss Merton,” she added, turning to Helen; “ a complaint of which I hope you know nothing but the name.”

Then shaking hands with Helen, a peculiar mark of favour from her, she allowed Lord Stanmore to hand her to her carriage.

“ Is she gone ? ” exclaimed Miss de Burgh, affecting a timid air as she entered; “ is that formidable Mrs. Falconer gone ? ”

“ Yes, my dear,” said Lady de Burgh; “ don’t speak so loud.”

Miss de Burgh, with a very ill-humoured face, “ was not aware that she had spoken loud; ” and finding that Lord Stanmore returned to Helen instead of seeing her mount, she began talking very earnestly to Mr. Tom Saville as he led her out, in order, if possible, to make his lordship jealous.

Lord Stanmore had a singular habit of

making a remark connected with any passing occurrence in the tone of a person hazarding an abstract theory, and as he asked Helen in a dry absent way, whether she did not think that to produce jealousy there must first be some feeling approaching to love, she could scarcely maintain her gravity, connecting it as she did with Miss de Burgh's late attempt upon the susceptible feelings of Mr. Tom Saville.

CHAPTER VIII.

I allow that;
But to choke up her spirits in a dark room
Is far more dangerous.

MASSINGER.

“LET me see, who is gone out riding?” said Lord Stanmore, stopping to consider, as they were walking leisurely along the terrace.

Everybody stopped directly, and repeated over the names of the people who were riding; for, notwithstanding the perfect equality that is said to be preserved in good society, a by-stander can easily discern the eager deference that is paid to anything in the shape of a title.

“Alice is not with them, she never goes

out," said Lord Stanmore to Mr. de Burgh ;
" let us have her to walk with us."

Mr. de Burgh swore a little, but he gave in to the proposal, and said they could call for her under the school-room window.

" Have you ever seen Alice ?" said Lord Stanmore to Helen.

" Alice, my lord ?" said Helen, puzzled.

" Alice de Burgh, the youngest daughter."

" Indeed," said Helen, " I never knew that Miss de Burgh had a sister."

" I dare say not," replied Lord Stanmore, " if poor Alice had been found guilty of high treason she could not be kept a more close prisoner. She is undergoing all the horrors of a modern education ; and this is her dungeon."

So saying, he took up a handful of pebbles and threw them against a barred window which was half open. Directly after, a finely formed hand clasped one of the bars, and a young girl looked down upon the party.

Helen was very much struck with her appearance; there was an expressiveness in her features, sometimes seen in the faces of very deaf persons: her look was language.

The girl paused a moment, and then clasping her hands together, she exclaimed in a tone so sweet and rich, that it thrilled to Helen's heart. "Oh! Stanmore, is that you?"

"Yes," said Lord Stanmore, in his usual easy way; "put on your bonnet and come and walk with us in the park."

"How I should like it! Oh! Stanmore, I have not seen you for two years!"

"Precisely; and therefore I want to see as much as I can of you now. Why, how you are grown, Alice! unless you are standing on a stool all this while, which I do believe you are."

"No, I am not, Stanmore; I am taller than Laura already."

"My dear!" exclaimed a sharp voice from within, while a thin figure presented itself by

the side of Alice : “ I really hope, my lord, you will excuse the very strange mode of address that my pupil has adopted towards yourself. Alice, my love, you have not finished that little question in algebra.”

“ Miss Brown,” said Lord Stanmore, raising his hat to her, “ will you be kind enough to send your pupil down to us in one minute and a half? don’t let her waste her time at the glass.”

“ My Lord ! ” exclaimed the astonished governess.

“ The proprieties are nicely preserved, Miss Brown,” continued Lord Stanmore. “ Alice will take a walk with me, and Miss Merton, and the Miss Fevershams, and Mr. Fanshawe and De Burgh, will keep us company, and tell tales if we flirt ; now then, Alice.”

“ Your lordship must be aware that this is impossible,” said Miss Brown ; “ Miss Alice is expecting her Italian master, and then we are to have the singing-master, and then—.”

“ Oh yes, Miss Brown, I know all that very well ; I know that poor Alice learns lessons all day long, and writes exercises all night in her sleep ; but I mean her to take a walk with us, so make up your mind not to expect her for an hour at least.”

“ Indeed, my lord—.”

“ Look here, Miss Brown,” said Lord Stanmore, planting himself directly under the window, “ if Alice is not here in two minutes, De Burgh and I mean to smash in those bars and carry her off by force ; or I’ll go to Sir Clement, and then you may take your leave of Alice for a week, at least.”

Thus adjured, Miss Brown relented, and sent her unfortunate pupil to dress for her walk.

“ I knew we should have such a devilish deal of trouble to get her out,” said Mr. de Burgh, leaning against the wall, in a deplorable state of exhaustion ; “ and really for such a stupid little idiot.”

“ Don’t say a word against Alice,” said Lord Stanmore ; “ she is a very old friend of mine.”

“ Oh ! I have leave !” cried Alice, darting out upon the terrace ; “ leave for half an hour, and now tell me” —

She stopped short as her eye fell on Helen, and drawing together her dark straight brows, she said haughtily to Lord Stanmore — “ who is that lady ?”

He introduced them ; then her face cleared, and she went on.

“ Now tell me, for I am never allowed to see a paper, — are you in parliament ?”

“ Not yet.” —

“ Not yet !” she exclaimed in a tone of the keenest disappointment ; “ tell me when, that I may think of it when the time comes.”

“ I am waiting for a vacancy. Mr. C——, the member for our side of the county, is not expected to live.”

“ Then I will not wish for it,” said Alice ;

“ it is a horrid thing to look to any man’s death as a means of pleasure.”

“ She has one of those straightforward minds,” said Lord Stanmore, apart to Helen, “ that nothing can pervert.”

Alice withdrew her hand from his arm, and walked on by herself.

“ What is the matter, Alice ? ” said Lord Stanmore, following her.

“ Oh ! nothing,” she replied, “ but,” turning the lustre of her dark reproachful eyes full on his face, “ you must needs talk to people of things that you do not wish me to hear.”

“ I swear that what I said was in praise of you,” exclaimed Lord Stanmore.

“ Then why not say it to me ? ”

“ Perhaps I was afraid of making you vain.”

“ Make *me* vain ! ” exclaimed Alice ; “ one would think you mistook me for Laura.”

“ Oh I could not do that,” said Lord Stanmore, laughing.

Alice took his arm, and they walked on together, talking of old times.

Mr. de Burgh found suddenly that it was too warm to walk, and lay down under a tree, while they went forward to look at the temple.

“What a nice creature Mr. de Burgh is,” said Miss Feversham to Helen; “so remarkably elegant.”

Helen had seldom seen a finer park than the one she was walking in, so translating the above remark into English for her own benefit, she replied,—“Oh certainly!”

“What do you think of Mr. Fanshawe?” asked Miss Jane Feversham.

“He is rather tall,” said Helen, perfectly at a loss what to say of a man whom she had scarcely noticed.

“Oh! he is such a pet of mine,” continued Miss Jane Feversham, he sings so nicely. “Do you sing?”

“Yes,” said Helen.

“ You did not sing yesterday evening,” said Miss Feversham.

“ No, I was not asked,” said Helen.

“ Are you fond of singing ?”

“ Yes, at home ; but I don’t like singing in company.”

“ Are you nervous ?” asked Miss Jane.

“ Not at all,” said Helen ; “ but it is too much trouble to sing against a number of speaking voices.”

“ Oh, but every one should contribute their share to the amusement of the company,” said Miss Feversham.

“ Yes if those persons who can sing cannot converse,” replied Helen ; “ otherwise they are required to contribute a double share of amusement. Since I never hear persons who do not sing, accusing themselves of not helping to entertain the company.”

“ Don’t you dote on Bellini ?” said Jane Feversham.

“ I really don’t,” said Helen.

“ Do you think Miss de Burgh handsome ? ”
asked Jane Feversham.

“ Yes, decidedly so,” replied Helen.

“ Do you ? I think she wants eyebrows, and her foot is too long ; besides, all that large plait of hair behind is false,—and many men consider her too tall.”

“ That settles it,” thought Helen.

“ How beautifully Mr. de Burgh dresses ! ”
said Miss Feversham.

“ I don’t think so,” replied Helen ; “ you can tell what he has on.”

“ Do you think him like Laura ? ” said Miss Feversham.

“ Rather so,” replied Helen, quite weary of her cross-examination.

At last they reached the Temple, which was built in a small valley smooth as a lawn, and dotted with large oaks. Helen thought that it was the very spot for a Druid’s altar ; she did not see the beauty of a white building

with a Grecian front, and stained glass windows.

Lord Stanmore and Alice were leaning in the window, talking earnestly, while the rest of the party sat in the shade, or strayed about to pass the time.

As they were loitering home, Mr. de Burgh joined them, and not having any specific object at the moment, he began to tease his sister.

“What an awful bonnet you have on, Alice,” he began; “such a crown!—a mile too high!”

“Is it not,” said Alice. “It came from mamma’s own milliner last week.”

“And your gown—you bought it second-hand of Dolly the dairy-maid,” said Mr. de Burgh.

Alice took up a stone and threw it at her brother in return for this hint, which rather frightened him, and he kept silence until they were near the house, when he called again to his sister.—

“ I say, Alice——.”

“ Well,” said she, clenching her hand.

“ I shall feel it my duty to tell Miss Brown how shockingly you have been flirting with Stanmore.”

“ You lie !” cried Alice, flashing upon him a look of intense disdain.

The whole party was lost in astonishment — perhaps such a word had never before been heard in those grounds.

“ Oh dear ! how very odd !” said Miss Feversham.

“ Go it !” said Mr. de Burgh, finding words at last for his excited feelings.

“ Don’t think I am sorry !” cried Alice, turning sharply round to Lord Stanmore ; “ he had no right to provoke me.”

“ No, it was too bad,” said Lord Stanmore.

“ Good-b’ye,” said Alice as they stopped at the door ; “ I don’t know when I shall see you again.”

“ To-morrow ? ”

“ Oh no, — I am not to see the *tableaux* ; all the music and pleasure going on in the house, while I am shut up with that horrid Miss Brown—it’s too bad.”

“ I’ll get leave for you,” said Lord Stanmore.

“ Will you ? — oh ! no, Laura will be sure to prevent it,” said she.

“ We shall see,” said Lord Stanmore.

“ Do you know,” said Alice, looking up in his face with such a soft expression, that no one would have supposed she could ever seem in a passion, “ I saw you yesterday over the staircase, as you were going in to dinner, but you never looked up at me.”

“ Shameful conduct,” said Lord Stanmore lightly.

“ Come, Alice,” cried Mr. de Burgh, “ do you mean to keep us standing here all day ? ”

Alice turned round sullenly and walked up to the schoolroom. Her Italian master had been dismissed when she returned, but the singing master was waiting her arrival, and

Alice was not in the humour for singing — like her sister, she had hardly any voice, and unlike her sister, she knew it. She utterly detested her music lessons, and it is but just to say that she gave her masters as much trouble as she possibly could.

To-day, fatigued by her ramble in the park and thinking of nothing but Lord Stanmore, she was in a worse humour than usual,—the clouds on her face dispersed into rain before the lesson was half over, and she sobbed the *solfeccio* in a very diverting manner.

After the lesson, she was regaled with a lecture from Miss Brown upon her conduct, accompanied by a few pages from the “*Aminta* of Tasso” to get by heart. Alice just glanced at them and then entered into a firm compact with herself that she would not learn one word of them.

After turning over in her mind how she could best annoy her governess, she threw herself into a chair in a lounging attitude,

with her feet crossed, and her head hung down.

“Miss Alice, what do I see?” exclaimed Miss Brown; “pray sit upright.”

Alice raised her head a quarter of an inch.

“Miss Alice,” continued the governess; “I shall inform her ladyship of this behaviour.”

“Do!” said Alice.

“Dear, dear! at the age of seventeen,” said the governess despondingly.

“Yes, at the age of seventeen to be treated like a baby or an idiot!” exclaimed Alice starting up passionately,—“I shall go mad soon, that is one comfort—yes, I had rather be mad than suffer the intolerable restraint of this way of life.”

“You ought to be grateful, my dear,” said Miss Brown, “for the benefits of a finished education.”

“I am not!” cried Alice, walking up and down the room in a state of great agitation,—“I would learn twenty times as much if I

might leave alone the things I detest, and study what I like.—What do I know of history, of the science of government, of philosophy, of anything but the trash through which I am driven by you?—you cannot make me play or draw, and you waste your time, and my health in trying—and I know what all this teaching is intended for, to train me for the slave-market as you have my sister; that I may make a good match: but I will foil you there too,—I am not to be sold. I wish I was a man—I do, with all my heart!”

Having uttered these incoherent words, Alice burst into a violent flood of tears.

Miss Brown had been very often used to scenes of this kind, but this was rather stronger than usual, and very considerably above Miss Brown’s comprehension, so she plied Alice with eau de cologne and sugar, under the idea that she had walked too far, and was over-fatigued.

Alice, who happened to like the taste of this

dram, took a good deal, and then went to sleep upon the sofa. And this was the education with which Lady de Burgh prepared her daughters for the sufferings and temptations of the world.

CHAPTER IX.

Listen to the truth. She is not as handsome as you, but she is *interesting*.

GRABBE'S *Cinderella*.

THE last rehearsal had been gone through, Miss de Burgh had made some alterations in her lama trimmings, and Mr. Tom Saville had settled the arrangement of his hair to his particular satisfaction. Lord Stanmore had dismissed the talisman from his thoughts, and was showing Helen some curious woodcuts of the "Dance of Death."

"If we could but contrive a skeleton," said he, "what a splendid set of *tableaux* these would make!"

"Miss de Burgh thought it a very shocking idea."

“ Why ? ”

“ It was quite beyond her skill to say why, she only thought skeletons such horrid things.”

Lord Stanmore quoted the skeletons that were present at the Egyptian banquets. Of these, it was evident that Miss de Burgh knew nothing ; she could have repeated nearly half the peerage without making a mistake ; but of what use was it to know anything about the Egyptians ?

So Lord Stanmore applied to Helen for her opinion ; and she said, that it seemed to her a mockery for the Egyptians to introduce the type of death among their revelry ; she never heard that they feasted the less for it, and she fancied that they rather looked on it as an incentive to enjoy the present time, than as a caution to be moderate from a regard to their future condition ; it belonged to Christianity to teach the doctrine of self command in its loftier attributes, and to invest the motive and the recompense with a purity that marked no other creed.

Some of the people sneered at this remark, as bordering on Methodism, but Lord Stanmore agreed with what Helen had said; and talked of the imperfect state of ancient philosophy, as arising from their ignorance of revealed religion.

All this was wormwood to Miss de Burgh, who saw that Helen was depriving her of Lord Stanmore's attention, without doing herself any good; for she knew that he would never offer himself to a woman in Helen's station: so as soon as she could, she broke off the conversation, by declaring that it was full time to begin dressing, for the time fixed for the *tableaux* was only an hour hence.

The party dispersed in an instant. Helen went up-stairs immediately, and Miss de Burgh stepped into the conservatory to superintend the making of a bouquet for Edith.

Lord Stanmore and Mr. Fanshawe not meaning to spend an hour upon their toilets, lounged away a few minutes in the library, and the

library opened into the conservatory. As a matter of course they began talking over the women who were staying in the house, and after a few disparaging remarks upon Miss Feversham's ankles, and little Mrs. Lister's teeth, Mr. Fanshawe observed,

“What a difference there was between Miss de Burgh and Miss Merton.”

“Difference!” said Lord Stanmore; “I believe so! the difference between a fine lady and a fine woman!”

Mr. Fanshawe said, “he thought Miss de Burgh a fine woman, if it were not for her affectation.”

Lord Stanmore said, “that affectation would spoil a goddess: Miss Merton, beautiful as she was, owed her chief charm to the rare simplicity of her character.”

“Miss de Burgh would be jealous,” said Mr. Fanshawe, “if she could hear you.”

“She is jealous of every one,” said Lord Stanmore, “except the person who will be the

most likely to interfere with her triumphs — her sister Alice.”

“ What noise was that in the conservatory,” said Mr. Fanshawe, rising.

They found a small flowerpot of rare heath broken to pieces, but no one was to be seen.

Helen was always quickly drest, and she was going down stairs to the room appointed for the performers, when she met Lord Stanmore, also in full costume, who stopped to compliment her on her appearance, and then said hastily—

“ What shall we do, Miss Merton ; Miss de Burgh refuses to appear.”

“ Indeed ! and why ? ”

“ Lady de Burgh says that she has been hysterical ; I suppose her dress does not fit : but how shall we do without her ? ”

“ Could not her sister take the part ? ” said Helen ; “ we could easily place her in the proper attitudes before the curtain rose.”

“ To be sure,” said Lord Stanmore ; “ a

capital plan ; I will go and arrange it directly."

Helen could not help laughing to herself when she thought that Miss de Burgh had most likely expected to be implored to change her purpose by Lord Stanmore and the whole body of performers, and that she would find her place immediately filled, and her ill-humour rendered of no importance.

In a few minutes Alice joined the party, splendidly attired in her sister's satin robes, and looking, though not so handsome, a great deal more interesting.

The *tableaux* were got up in the best possible style ; each picture was accompanied with appropriate music ; the dresses were magnificent, and the attitudes well studied. The common rule on such occasions seemed reversed, and instead of the performers, the *audience* seemed to derive gratification from the exhibition.

The two most admired pictures were, the

scene in which Berengaria pleads to Richard, and the last scene, in which Edith unhelms Sir Kenneth. In the first, Alice succeeded admirably in giving the expression of intense haughtiness to her features, as she stood drawn up to her full height, and gazing down at Mr. Saville, who personated Richard; while he, not having been accustomed to such looks during the rehearsals, became quite uncomfortable under her glittering eyes. Helen was kneeling before Richard's couch, as Miss de Burgh had arranged, but that young lady had not calculated on the long tresses which now trailed on the ground, glancing like gold, yet soft as the finest silk.

Miss de Burgh was among the audience, and had the pleasure of hearing discussions on Helen's beautiful hair from all the young men around.

Very gracefully did Alice raise the helmet, as Lord Stanmore knelt before her, and Helen heard no complaints on his part at the hard-

ship of having to kneel so long to Alice. She stood by with the spurs in her hand watching the group; she could not see Lord Stanmore's face, but Alice's fine hands trembled exceedingly.

“Now for the compliments!” said Lord Stanmore, as soon as the curtain fell.

“Ha!” exclaimed Alice, looking bitterly towards the audience.

Helen was glad to join the company, that she might see her mother and Anne. To her great annoyance she found Sir Edward talking to her sister, but she took a chair on the other side of Mrs. Merton, and felt quite relieved that he did not address to her any remark on the performance. He only said, that her sister had been in a state little short of ecstasy during the *tableaux*, and Helen, replied that she was glad of it, and looked another way.

Lord Stanmore, shortly after, brought Alice to sit by Helen; and Mrs. Falconer coming out of another room with Lady de Burgh,

begged to be presented to Mrs. Merton. Helen wondered at this step on the part of Mrs. Falconer. Was it possible that Sir Edward had any designs in his visits! Not on her; that she could safely aver; but Anne, young as she was, her beauty was so remarkable, and her manners so attaching, that she might have made an impression on his heart. Indeed she had noticed that his address was much softer and more gracious to her than to any one else. She broke off her reverie, however, as Alice de Burgh addressed her, in her earnest manner.

“What do you think of Stanmore?” she asked.

“I think he will take a prominent part in public affairs,” replied Helen.

“What makes you think so?” said Alice, quickly.

“Because, with very good abilities, he possesses an ingratiating manner,” replied Helen, “and, therefore may command success in an

assembly. Want of temper has marred the advancement of many men."

"I am glad of it," said Alice; "I despise a man who has no object," and she glanced round the assembled company, with about as much disdain as could be conveyed in looks.

Lord Stanmore interrupted their conversation by coming up to take Alice into the supper-room.

"It was but fair," he said, "that he should have the pleasure of escorting his Edith."

Miss de Burgh, mortified as she was, yet threw a glance of triumph at Helen, as Alice was led away.

She, however, looked so very well contented by the side of Colonel Marshall, that she could not but feel her malice was misplaced.

Lord Stanmore was paying the most exclusive attention to Alice, but it seemed to Helen that it was rather the half-bantering homage that a man will sometimes render to a child who pleases him, than the devotion of a lover.

This was extremely misplaced, for Alice had nothing of the child in her composition. She looked more haughty than ever, under the consciousness that she was the object of attention to the first man in the room.

Anne seemed perfectly absorbed by Sir Edward's conversation; she sat with downcast eyes, and her cheek beautifully stained with crimson, listening, but scarcely replying, yet looking the picture of happiness.

Helen became very uneasy, she devoutly hoped that Anne did not really care about him; of all people in the world, he was the last to whom she would trust any woman's happiness; she thought she would speak to Anne about it as soon as they were at home, but they both found themselves too tired to talk, and hastened to bed without coming to an explanation.

CHAPTER X.

—————did she bar
Love from among her griefs ? for such the affections are.
BYRON.

ABOUT this time Sir Edward began to come almost every day to the Mertons. He contrived sometimes to bring Colonel Marshall with him, as if by way of excuse ; but a single man, with a good fortune, hardly thinks he needs any excuse for intruding into any family where there are single daughters.

Helen disliked his coming, but still it never struck her that she was the cause. She had so very little vanity : and by that strange blindness which leads one to overlook at the time a hundred little traces of motives, which after-

wards rush upon us with the force of entire conviction, with a very common blindness then, she believed that he was seeking his own amusement for the moment by trifling with little Anne, without any regard for the probable consequences to her feelings ; and Helen's dislike increased accordingly.

If she ever thought of herself as in connexion with him, it was that he could never become really attached to her, or to any woman, and as his interest could not possibly be advanced by paying his addresses to her, she therefore took it for granted that he had no intention of doing so.

And no virtue — no splendour of intellect could have so far attracted Sir Edward as to have made him seek her in marriage ; but what these could not effect, beauty, unaided even by wealth, accomplished ; beauty, the golden gift, the most rare, the most enviable, of all the endowments of woman. Sir Edward loved her. So ignorant was he of Helen's character, that,

finding he did not make upon her as rapid an impression as he could wish, he had recourse to the not uncommon expedient of piquing her by paying great attention to some one else in her presence ; and unhappily, that *some one* chanced to be little Anne. He forgot, while he did so, that Helen's mental faculties were by no means in a torpid state, and that without being able to divine his motives, she saw enough of the shallow nature of his attentions to her sister to feel for him the most unmitigated contempt.

At last Helen, who feared to warn Anne of her danger, lest she should suggest to her feelings that were possibly not yet awakened, begged her mother to exclude Sir Edward from the privileges he had assumed to himself, and deny him this constant admission ; but Mrs. Merton replied, that since he conducted himself with perfect propriety, she should not be justified in denying him her house, until he declared the purport of his visits, and then it would be in Helen's power, if she pleased, to put a stop to them.

And Helen, though unsatisfied, was obliged to be silent.

“ I wonder your sister does not draw,” said Sir Edward, as he stood, one day, leaning over the chair in which Anne was seated, watching the progress of her pencil — it was a favourite post of his, by the by ; “ she has every requisite for the art.”

“ Has she ? ” said Anne, looking up, “ and what are the requisites ? ”

“ You share them with her — shall I make a list of them ? ”

“ Oh ! do.”

“ A correct eye, an educated mind, and such a hand as the poets ascribe to Aurora, when they speak of her fine fingers dyed with the morning clouds.”

As he spoke, he laid his hand gently on little Anne’s — she turned crimson — she hardly dared to stir.

“ I never see a woman,” he continued, “ disgrace a pencil by grasping it in a large coarse

hand, without feeling a pleasing certainty that she is utterly wasting her time in the pursuit of art."

Helen was sitting near them. She looked at Sir Edward for a moment with an unquiet expression, and then left the room.

He followed her with his eyes, and thought — poor short-sighted mortal! — that he had succeeded in making her jealous.

CHAPTER XI.

Time changes all things—from the ruin'd tower
O'er which the ivy mantles, to the hearts
Which once were link'd together, and now stand
Apart like coldest strangers—chill'd by time.

Anon.

“DID M. Steinberg arrive last night I wonder?” said Mrs. Merton to her daughters one morning.

“Downs said not, mamma,” replied Anne; “Colonel Marshall is in such a fidget about him.”

“No wonder, my dear — so often as he has expected him, and given him up.”

“I think he never means to come,” said Anne; “this is the *genius*, Helen!”

“Oh! no,” said Helen; “all the faults of a man's *character* are sure to be laid to his

genius, if he has any ; which is very unfair, since they are two distinct things.”

“ But this is not a fault, perhaps, of M. Steinberg’s,” said Anne.

“ I like punctuality,” replied Helen.

“ What work are you doing ? ” asked Anne.

“ Nothing,” pretending to net, replied Helen ; “ but I have such a headache I cannot see the meshes.”

“ Go into the garden, my dear,” said Mrs. Merton ; “ it is a shame for any one to be indoors such a beautiful day.”

Helen rose. “ On no account send for me, my dear mamma, if you have visitors. Then,” said she, half to herself, “ I shall escape the annoyance of that disagreeable Sir Edward.”

“ Oh ! Helen,” said little Anne.

But a ring at the bell, at this moment, caused Helen to escape, without waiting to defend her remark. The day was very warm, and the summer flowers, then in their greatest profusion, loaded the still air with their sweets.

Helen loitered over the flower-beds, to gather herself a nosegay ; and then walked away under the trees to make it up. The atmosphere was misty with the heat ; she leaned back in the rustic chair, and gazed up among the thick branches which broke away here and there to let in glimpses of the deep blue sky.

Her thoughts naturally reverted to M. Steinberg, so often expected during the last few days by her friends the Marshalls — she speculated upon the change that time, and still more, that golden fortunes, had wrought in his character and manners. It had so happened that her father, whose least word was an oracle to her, had, from the first period of his acquaintance with this young German, conceived the highest opinion of him. He had even said, in Helen's hearing, little as he intended the remark to reach her ears, that there was no person to whom he could so readily intrust the happiness of his daughter as to Steinberg.

And by all the mute eloquence which lovers

know so well how to employ, he had made the most trifling acts speak his devotion to her beauty. That he did not then declare himself was hardly to be wondered at, since he was not in a condition to offer his hand to any one, and Helen's extreme youth rendered it improbable that her father would consent to her forming a protracted engagement ; so she left Vienna uncertain of his sentiments, and resolved, young as she was, to subdue her own.

From that time she had never heard of Eric Steinberg until Colonel Marshall told them of his intended visit. She had long felt that his admiration for her had been that of an artist for a handsome model—and that model, a child. If she had thought otherwise at the time, it had been a weakness, long amended. She was now to meet him as a perfect stranger ; in that light he would, of course, consider her, and she would not be so poorly deficient in pride as to have a better memory than himself.

As she thought over these things she unfast-

ened her nosegay, and threw the flowers one by one into the water.

She heard a step—the parting of the branches. Sir Edward Falconer was coming towards her.

“Good morning,” said Helen, gathering up the flowers that were left her.

“I am sorry to hear that you have a headache,” said he, sitting down beside her.

Helen could not quite get up and leave him, so she said, with a good grace, that her headache was of no consequence.

“I am sure,” said he, “that it must be of consequence to—to—”

“To mamma and Anne?” said Helen smiling,—“no, you can bear witness that there are some things which make me cross, but a headache is not of the number.”

“If you suffer.”

“Oh! I hope they keep their sympathy for grander occasions,” said Helen passing her hand over her forehead; “this is no-

thing but a hint that there is thunder in the air."

"Mrs. Merton sent me to tell you that luncheon was ready."

"So soon?" asked Helen.

"Have you been reading?" said he, "that the time has passed so quickly."

"No," she replied, holding up her flowers.

He gathered a rose carelessly, and gave it her to add to her bouquet. She took it with perfect indifference.

"You look quite tired," said Sir Edward with a tone of interest.

"I dare say I do," answered Helen; "I feel so, this warm day."

"Will you take my arm?" he said.

It was but a stone's throw to the drawing-room window; Helen took his arm, and they entered together.

"Ah! here she is!" exclaimed Colonel Marshall, as she came in. "Sir Edward has been a long time finding you, — ha! ha!

Will you allow me to introduce to you, my nephew, Baron Steinberg?"

The young man had risen when he first saw Helen, and remained standing a little behind his uncle.

"If Miss Merton deigns to preserve half so distinct a remembrance of our former acquaintance as I do," he said, advancing with a very courteous manner, "an introduction will be hardly necessary."

"M. Steinberg," said she calmly, and holding out her hand, "I remember you perfectly." She could hear her own heart beat, but her voice never faltered.

They shook hands, and sat down, Helen close to the window, Steinberg at the other end of the room, beside Mrs. Merton.

Helen tried to untie her mantle, but finding her hands tremble, she gave up the attempt.

"What is it?" asked Sir Edward.

"A knot."

"Can I help you?"

“ No, thank you.”

“ Do allow me.”

She pulled the ribbons hastily apart, and throwing aside her mantle, said, that “ men never could unfasten knots. They always made them worse.”

“ You are quite out of breath, Helen,” said little Anne ; “ you must have been running—running races with Sir Edward Falconer,” she added, glancing at him from her laughing half-closed eyes.

Sir Edward was never offended at anything Anne might say, so he merely told her that he should run his next race with her.

She warned him that she could run a great deal faster than Helen.

From this, they went on to talk a good deal of nonsense together, and Helen was left at leisure to observe M. Steinberg.

His manner seemed to her less lively, but more graceful, more composed—and she noticed which she had not done at first—that instead

of wearing his hair in the Raphael style, it was cut short, and that he no longer wore moustaches. This change he had effected as soon as he came to England, in compliance with the custom of the nation; and although less like a picture in consequence, he looked considerably more like a gentleman.

Colonel Marshall would not stay to take luncheon; and Steinberg took leave of Helen among the rest, with a graceful ease, that entirely explained to her his present feelings.

On the whole she felt relieved. The first meeting was over; she had made a mistake,—and repaired it.

CHAPTER XII.

The arts
That grace sweet woman's home.
Hymn concerning Venus.

" I THINK I told you, my dears, that we dine at the Marshalls' to-day," said Mrs. Merton, the next morning at breakfast.

" Oh ! dear, how nice !" said little Anne ;
" I will finish that worsted ball for Ernestine : where did I leave my workbag ? "

" Where indeed ? " said Helen laughing ;
" and the scissors, and the worsteds, Anne ! "

" Here they all are, so don't slander me, Helen," said Anne, setting to work very busily.

" I wish, mamma," said Helen, " that you

would excuse my going to-day, — I suppose it is the hot weather, but I feel quite good for nothing.”

“ If you wish it, my dear; but I think a little change would do you good,—besides, you would be amused with that young German.”

“ Amused ! what utter strangers we are to each other ! ”

“ Ah ! a note, Downs ! ” cried Anne, trying to take it up; “ whom is it from, I wonder ! ”

“ For Miss Helen,” said Downs, suddenly withdrawing the salver out of the reach of Miss Anne’s curious fingers.

“ Oh ! it is from Mrs. Falconer,” said Helen ;

“ I will send an answer, Downs ; Sir Edward is gone to town, (delightful news !) and she asks me to spend the day alone with her — the very thing I should like : mamma, I may go ? ”

“ Why, if you please, my dear ; perhaps you will be quieter there than at the Marshalls’ : what do you mean to wear ? ”

“ This very muslin,” said Helen, folding her note.

“ Helen, *have* you any vanity?” asked Anne.

“ So much,” said Helen, “ that I fancy my company acceptable in any dress.”

Sir Edward had brought about a degree of visiting between the Mertons and his mother, and Mrs. Falconer seemed to have taken a great fancy to Helen.

“ She is so clever,” said Helen; while she was waiting for Mrs. Falconer’s carriage, which was to be sent for her; “ we shall have such a nice long gossip this morning—and all alone, what a comfort.”

When she arrived at Falcon House, she was shown into the library. To her surprise she found Lord Stanmore with Mrs. Falconer, at a table covered with books and papers. Mrs. Falconer rose, and came down the room to meet Helen.

“ I had no intention of playing you false,”

said she, looking to Lord Stanmore; "I thought myself alone, but my friend Lord Stanmore came quite unexpectedly to talk over some business."

"I do hope you will forgive me, Miss Merton," said Lord Stanmore; "but I came to take Mrs. Falconer's advice about my maiden speech."

"You are then returned?" said Helen; "I wish you joy; don't let me be in the way,—I will take up a review and wait till you are at liberty."

Addressing the last part of her sentence to Mrs. Falconer, Helen walked quietly to the broad casement window, and began to read.

Lord Stanmore was bringing one folio after another to the table for some historic references. Mrs. Falconer turned them over, and Helen admired the readiness with which she found and marked the quotations that she had suggested.

"If you like dragging about those books,"

said she, looking up at last, "very well. It would be vastly easy to ring for a servant."

"I hate having servants about," said Lord Stanmore.

"Do you know," said Mrs. Falconer to Helen, after a short pause, "where to find that anecdote of Cæcina—that where he threw himself into the gateway of the camp?"

"In Tacitus," said Helen rising; "I can find it in a moment; the first book of the Annals."*

* "LXVI.—It happened in the course of the night, that a horse broke loose; and scared by the noise of the soldiers, ran wild through the camp, trampling down all that came in his way. This accident spread a general panic. In the first hurry of surprise it was generally believed that the Germans had stormed the intrenchments. The soldiers rushed to the gates, chiefly to that called the Decuman, at the back of the camp, remote from the enemy, and the most likely to favour their escape. Cæcina knew that it was a false alarm, he tried to recall the men from their error; he commanded, he implored, he laid hold of numbers; but finding all without effect, he threw himself on the ground, and lay stretched at length across the passage.

"At the sight of their general in that condition, the men recoiled with horror from the outrage of trampling on his body. In that interval the tribunes and centurions convinced the men that their fears were without foundation."

“Read it, pray,” said Mrs. Falconer, as Lord Stanmore gave Helen the book.

It was but a few lines, and Helen read that noble passage descriptive of one of the finest scenes of antiquity.

“There is a picture!” exclaimed Mrs. Falconer; “with what infinite effect might an allusion to this scene be introduced: Miss Merton,” said she, “I wish more young ladies would follow your example, and learn to read well and naturally.”

Lord Stanmore thanked Helen for her assistance, and she was not sorry to see him gather up his pencil notes, and soon after take his leave.

“That young man may be a great political character,” said Mrs. Falconer. “I hope he will not throw away his great opportunities, for his mother’s sake,” she added; she paused, and seemed looking for something among the books on the table.

“Here,” said she, taking up a miniature

case, "here is a picture of my friend Lady Prescott, which he brought me to-day : what do you think of it?"

"It is beautiful," said Helen, "so purely intellectual."

"Do you see any resemblance to Lord Stanmore?" asked Mrs. Falconer.

"No," said Helen, "for the colouring of the faces is different, and I think nothing so completely prevents a likeness as that."

"Lady Prescott's daughters are thought like her," said Mrs. Falconer; "and so they are, if you take every particle of intellect from her face."

"Which would not be easy," said Helen.

"So they are all thought much greater beauties than their mother ever was," said Mrs. Falconer. "Well, I hope Lord Stanmore will do well."

They walked out into the old garden, from terrace to terrace, and among the clipped hedges.

“ I hope,” said Helen, after a short time, “ that Lord Stanmore will not so entirely devote himself to political projects as to exclude the domestic virtues from his character.”

“ Why,” said Mrs. Falconer, rather surprised at the remark, “ I do not think he will ever be a very domestic character ; he can be agreeable enough in society, but politics are his passion, and you cannot have everything in a man.”

“ No,” said Helen, “ but I saw a little bye-play when I was at Lady de Burgh’s which interested me enough to make me wish that he might be at least a man incapable of trifling with——”

“ You do not mean,” said Mrs. Falconer, stopping short, “ Lord Stanmore has had the folly to pay any decided attention to Miss de Burgh? ”

“ No,” said Helen, “ every one would acquit him of that ; I was thinking of the younger sister.”

“ A fine girl, with great energy of character,” said Mrs. Falconer ; “ but Lord Stanmore will never marry into that family ; of what use would such a connexion be to him ? They have no parliamentary influence.”

“ Poor Alice !” thought Helen.

“ I totally disapprove of unequal marriages,” said Mrs. Falconer.

“ So do I,” replied Helen ; “ but equal hearts I think of more importance than equal fortunes.”

“ So do all young people,” said Mrs. Falconer. “ But it is a fault of Lord Stanmore’s, and I have often told him of it, that he devotes himself too exclusively to every woman whose manners please him.”

“ It is a very common fault,” said Helen ; “ I think it is the business of a woman to recollect that it takes a great deal to make a man marry ; and not to interpret a little flattery, as a preliminary to a regular offer.”

“ I must say for my son,” said Mrs. Fal-

coner, "that he is utterly incapable of offering any attention to a woman without the most decided meaning."

They were standing under an old beech-tree, and Helen's face was visible to Mrs. Falconer; it was lit up by a sudden flash of joy; she was thinking of Anne; it was clear that he must love her, and if she returned it,—why — she was the best judge of her own happiness.

"I should never oppose his choice on such a subject, let it fall where it might," said Mrs. Falconer, distinctly; "but if his taste coincided with mine, how happy it would make me."

Helen, not knowing how to explain to Mrs. Falconer that she was not the person in question, looked up in her face with an unsatisfied expression, and Mrs. Falconer was about to proceed, when a servant came up to tell them dinner was ready.

"You see," said Mrs. Falconer, smiling, as

she took Helen's arm, that I make my ill-health an excuse for doing as I like ; dining, for instance, at this uncouth hour ; and Edward spoils me by complying with all my whims."

The dinner passed very pleasantly ; Mrs. Falconer had great powers of conversation, and some humour ; and they talked very merrily, while the ladies in the village were wondering how a young person like Helen could bear to visit such a stiff, tiresome, cold woman as *that* Mrs. Falconer.

There were some beautiful flasks and dishes at the dessert, of ground glass and silver filigree, the shape of which particularly pleased Helen, which Mrs. Falconer said her son had given her to humour her taste for the antique ; he was so attentive to her fancies, she said, that she hardly ventured to express them.

Helen, in whose favour Sir Edward had risen amazingly, since her mind was set at

rest with respect to little Anne, expressed her admiration of this proof of his kindness.

They spent the time until tea, in looking over portfolios of prints — absolute treasures, and some rare books which Mrs. Falconer ordered to be brought into the drawing-room for Helen. The hours flew, as they generally do when two intelligent people meet :— some people think eight the proper number for society — commend me to a *tête-à-tête*.

There was hardly a garden in the neighbourhood which did not boast of a stream ; and now as the sun was setting, Mrs. Falconer took Helen through the grounds to a meadow, through which a broad sheet of water passed ; and there under a row of willows they sauntered up and down, enjoying the freshness which can only be found near water, and listening to the distant village bells, which came across the river with such a silvery tone.

Helen was enjoying herself very much, when she saw coming towards them a person who

turned out to be no other than Sir Edward Falconer.

He hastened up to them, raised his hat to Helen, (she never shook hands with him,) and offered his arm to Mrs. Falconer.

“ And how have you been during the day ? ” said he to his mother ; “ quite free from pain, I hope ? ”

“ How can you ask me ? ” said she, “ when you see that I have had the pleasure of Miss Merton’s society ; the day has passed very cheerfully.”

He looked at Helen as if he meant to thank her, but perhaps he thought better of it.

“ Did Stanmore come here this morning ? ” he asked.

“ Yes, only for a short time.”

Sir Edward looked full at Helen ; she was gazing very contentedly up into the trees.

“ My dear mother,” he said, “ you had better come in directly, the dew is falling.”

“ I must have one more turn,” said Mrs.

Falconer, "one just begins now to smell the new haystacks—are they not sweet?"

"You will have another attack of rheumatism," said her son.

"No matter,—those delightful haystacks!" was all her reply.

"Oh! pray don't run any risk!" said Helen.

"What? you think me very *humorous*, as our old poets called it," said Mrs. Falconer; "come, I will go in. Edward, have you dined? and what may have brought you home so much sooner than you were expected?"

Sir Edward had finished his business, and came home directly: he abhorred town.

On the drawing-room table there was a beautiful *bouquet* of red and white moss roses, which he had brought his mother, because they were better than those in their garden,—so perfect that they might have been moulded in wax.

"Very extravagant of you," said Mrs. Fal-

coner, looking extremely pleased, “because we have plenty, though I allow, none so fine as these:” and she selected two beautiful specimens and gave them to Helen.

Helen took leave very soon afterwards, and Sir Edward saw her down stairs, and handed her into the carriage with all possible respect.

“I wonder why it is,” said Helen to herself, “that the very sight of that man always irritates me. Is it possible that Anne can like him? I will find out all about it soon, of that I am determined.”

CHAPTER XIII.

Lucy determined that her lover's eye
Would not distress nor supplication spy.
That in her manner he should nothing find
To indicate the weakness of her mind.
He saw no eye that wept, no frame that shook,
No fond appeal was made by word or look.

CRABBE.

THE next morning Mrs. Merton told her daughters that some law business required her presence in London. She could not take both with her, and she thought of the two it would be better to take Anne, as she was the least fitted to be left alone; she should only be absent a week.

Both the girls acquiesced without a moment's reluctance, for they had been accustomed to

yield cheerfully to their mother's wishes, but they neither of them were pleased at the arrangement.

Helen would have been glad to be removed from the possibility of meeting M. Steinberg, and Anne thought with a sigh that it would be a whole week before she should see Sir Edward again.

While Anne was determining on the number of collars and gloves she should want to take with her, Mrs. Marshall came in and insisted on having Helen at her house while her mamma was absent. It was in vain that she protested she should be very happy alone, and that she would not inconvenience Mrs. Marshall. Gertrude begged to ask if she supposed her house was not large enough to accommodate her, and hinted that a young lady so much admired as Helen was, could not possibly be left alone for a week, so come she must.

So accordingly, the next morning, as soon as she had seen her mother and sister set off

in the old carriage, she sat down and waited patiently for her friend to arrive. Mrs. Marshall asked Helen if she would walk home with her through the fields, and they set out together.

Mrs. Marshall could talk of nothing but Eric Steinberg, she was so delighted with him. Sir Edward was a great favourite of hers; but really, Eric!—although he was her nephew, no power could make him call her anything but *cousin*—for he was very gallant, like foreigners—yet he seemed to mean everything he said, like Germans—Helen had scarcely seen him yet, well—she thought they must like each other. “Oh! Sir Edward—she forgot—well, but that need not prevent Helen’s being excellent friends with Eric.”

“Dear Gertrude,” said Helen; “how can I convince you that Sir Edward has nothing to do with my likes or dislikes?”

“Oh! yes; that was very pretty,—young ladies always said so,” Mrs. Marshall replied.

Helen disclaimed being a young lady, if telling the truth disqualified her for the character,—for she literally meant what she said, even on such a delicate subject as liking or disliking a gentleman; she did dislike Sir Edward Falconer, and she only wished, as far as she was concerned, that he would come less often to their house.

Gertrude laughed, and said that Helen was certainly in love, though perhaps she did not know it—she had all the symptoms.

Helen quoted some of Rosalind's symptoms, and exculpated herself from the charge. "Her hose were not ungartered, nor her bonnet unbanded, she begged Gertrude to observe; her eyes were neither blue, nor sunken, nor did she feel quarrelsome, except when any one accused her of liking Sir Edward."

Mrs. Marshall was silenced, but not convinced—she had no idea of being defeated in her plans.

They went into the drawing-room as soon

as they had reached the house, it was empty—Helen felt glad of it ; she wished to see as little as possible of M. Steinberg.

“ Where is Colonel Marshall ? ” asked Gertrude of a servant who came in with a note.

“ Master is up in the gallery fighting with the Baron,” said the man, leaving the room.

“ Fighting ! these country servants ! ” said Mrs. Marshall laughing. “ But Sir Edward was here not an hour ago—I am not going to be deserted in this manner,—they cannot all three be fighting at once.” She pushed open the library door as she spoke.

Steinberg was lying on a sofa reading.

“ You lazy creature ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Marshall, as she entered.

“ Ah ! *ma chère cousine*,” he exclaimed, springing from the sofa ; “ *que tu es cruelle !* ”

“ I ! what have I been doing ? ”

“ The *laisser ici, mourir*.”

“Of what?—hunger, I suppose:—could not you ring for luncheon without my leave?”

“Non,—*d’ennui*.”

“Come, speak English, don’t be idle,—what have you been doing with yourself?”

“What you call—fencing.”

“What? with Colonel Marshall?”

“Yes, my good uncle; but he could not touch me.”

“Vanity!”

“Vérité.”

“But where is Sir Edward?”

“Ah! *ma foi, que sai-je?*” said the Baron with a sudden change of tone.

“What is the matter?”

“Nothing—shall I find him?”

“No, come here; you did not know that Miss Merton was in the next room.”

Steinberg came into the drawing-room directly; Helen turned to address him very quietly.

“Did you not find it very warm walking?” said he.

“ Not through the fields,” said Helen.

“ Ah ! there are no fields like those of England,” said the Baron.

“ I am glad you have found that out,” said Mrs. Marshall ; “ we must find you a wife, and so keep you here, Eric.”

“ Do you think so, cousin ? ” said Steinberg, absently.

“ Yes ; I will give you a character,” said she laughing.

“ When I want one, I will apply to you,” said he.

“ What bad French you Germans speak,” said Mrs. Marshall, after a short pause.

“ So they say of us,” replied Steinberg ; “ but so does everybody except a Parisian.”

“ How shall I finish this purse ? ” said Gertrude, who had opened her netting-box—“ this half of it, you see, is yellow.”

“ Is it for me, Madam ? ”

“ No, indeed.”

“ Then I will not tell you.”

“ Well, it shall be for you, perhaps.”

“ Then let the other half be black—it will look singular.”

“ So it will. Can you draw patterns?”

“ I dare say I could, Madam.”

“ Then I wish you would draw me one for worsted work.”

“ With pleasure.”

“ Stop, Eric,” said Mrs. Marshall; “ that ’s a man in armour with two little boys; I want a pattern, something like this on my gown, not a picture.”

“ Oh! I thought you ladies worked pictures,” said Steinberg, tearing up his sketch; “ that pattern is beyond me, I fear.”

“ How silent you are, Helen,” said Mrs. Marshall; “ what have you found?”

“ I was only looking at one of these annuals,” said Helen.

“ The binding is the best part of all those books now,” said Mrs. Marshall.

“ Don’t you think the binding the best part

of every book, cousin?" said Steinberg laughing.

Mrs. Marshall laughed too, and owned that she was not particularly fond of reading.

"They do such honour to your bust of Helen," said Mrs. Marshall soon after. "It is the only piece of sculpture in the house. Helen, too, admires it of all things."

"Yes," said Helen, "and without vanity; for you have evidently made use of my features to embody some fancy of your own. I think the *pose* particularly graceful."

"Come, Eric," said Mrs. Marshall, "make some pretty speech."

"No," he said, "I could only tell Miss Merton what hundreds must have told her better. The art would achieve much that could record her nature."

"What a colour!" said Mrs. Marshall, mischievously looking at Helen;—"you are an artist, tell me what it is like. It is not red, nor pink, nor scarlet, nor carmine; it is this,"

said she, drawing a camellia from a vase, "but then, what *is* this colour?"

"I am not an artist for colour," replied Steinberg, taking the camellia from her hand, and inspecting it, as if there had been no question of anything else.

"Gertrude," said Helen, "I know that dressing for dinner is always a grand affair in your house. Is not it time to go upstairs?"

"It really is," said Gertrude, looking at her watch; "come, Helen, I have a new cane-zou that I want to show you."

When Helen returned to the drawing-room, she found Sir Edward there: he began to talk to her. Baron Steinberg was opposite, watching her; strange, she thought, since he could not care for Sir Edward's attention, were it more marked than it was—then, the thought crossed her mind that he looked on her as a handsome picture. She had never been annoyed about her beauty before,—but to be admired for that, and by him.

She answered Sir Edward at random ; she hoped afterwards that she had said nothing ridiculous.

“ Cousin, where are your children ? ” said Eric, as Mrs. Marshall entered.

“ In the garden, I believe.”

“ I never see them ; who is it that shuts them up ? you, or my uncle ? ”

“ Oh ! my doing : the Colonel spoils the children ; he always did, and always will. Is not this a pretty handkerchief ? ”

“ Worthy of your good taste, cousin ; that lace is beautiful.”

Sir Edward looked with disdain through his half shut eyes at the man who could flatter a lady’s pocket handkerchief. In another minute he had fresh cause for contempt : Steinberg had beckoned the children into the veranda, and was tossing little Alfred up to a bough of clematis that swung from the roof, talking German nonsense to him all the time.

“ Eric,” said little Ernestine, looking up to

him and blushing at her boldness, "if you would play me a tune, I should so like it."

"Yes, my beauty, a thousand : what tune?" said he, leading her in.

Sir Edward, seeing Ernestine, asked her to come and speak to him ; but she was shy, and with a raised colour, she shook her ringlets over her face, and followed her cousin.

Just as he opened the piano, dinner was announced.

"Oh !" said Ernestine, in a disappointed tone ; "only one tune, cousin !"

"Pray go on, Madam," said Steinberg, seating himself at the piano ; "I must obey the child."

"Well," said Mrs. Marshall, very much pleased by his fondness for her little girl, "I am shocked at you ! I hope you will make a thousand apologies to Miss Merton."

"I do," said he, turning to her as she passed.

Helen smiled her forgiveness, and left the room.

Sir Edward was so angry and disgusted at such a want of etiquette, that he could hardly eat his soup ; the idea of stopping to play waltzes to a little brat !

“ The soup is cold, Eric,” said Colonel Marshall, as his nephew took his place at the table.

“ Never mind ; it is no matter,” he replied.

“ You have not heard Eric play,” said Mrs. Marshall to Helen.

“ Never, till just now,” said Helen.

“ Oh ! that is nothing ; he can play beautifully.”

“ Madam !” said the Baron.

“ Oh ! you are very modest,” said Mrs. Marshall, laughing ; “ send me some of that dish you have before you.”

Helen and Mrs. Marshall went into the garden after dinner, and were strolling about under the trees, when Steinberg joined them.

“ You see, cousin,” he said, “ it is impossi-

ble to be long absent from you ; and my uncle is talking politics with his guest, and I do not understand English politics."

" But if you had listened, you might have learned something," said Gertrude.

" Ah ! what lesson so instructive as that unfolded by nature ?" said Steinberg, looking round. " Is there not more calm wisdom in that sky, than in the turbulent discussions of a whole senate ?"

" Oh ! we English are so fond of freedom,—you cannot understand it," said Mrs. Marshall, attempting a superior air.

" Freedom !" said Steinberg, laughing. — " To hear human beings at this advanced time of day talking about freedom ! I thought people had left off trying to grasp rainbows ! Freedom is too impalpable a dream to be ever realised. In proportion as the dignified and unselfish submission to the crown diminishes, a mean, degrading subservience to public opinion increases."

“ But here, every man likes to have a share in the government.”

“ That is,” said Steinberg, “ the man who crouches to the gross will of the multitude, recognises his own image in the ignorant herd, and fancies that he bends to a type of himself.”

“ Ah !” said Mrs. Marshall, who had no idea of arguing, “ it is a glorious thing to be free.”

“ I will tell you *how* free,” said Steinberg ; “ my uncle, before I left him, was telling of a friend of his, whose cottage had been secretly entered by a poor woman. She had crept in through a window unperceived. He cannot dislodge her. If he wants his cottage, never mind, he must go without it. She will pay him no money ; no matter for that, he may take her goods, (she has none,) but not dislodge her. He has spent time and money, and the *laws* cannot restore him his property, — the woman still holds it.* This might happen

* A fact.

in America, with the addition of the proprietor being shot in the street as he went to make his complaint, if the woman happened to be in favour with the populace."

"So you prefer a despotism, Eric," said Mrs. Marshall.

"So far," said Steinberg, "that in a free country, the majority are attended to, and the minority suffer grievous wrong, while in a despotism the majority must also have justice done them, since it is an axiom in philosophy that no government will continue a day without administering more justice than injustice; while the minority fares like the rest, not being separated politically from the remainder of the state. But you have always one consolation left you; if you are injured by the laws, as you are said to help to make the laws, though only by a quibble in logic, you can accuse *yourselves* of all your misfortunes."

"By the by, Eric," said Mrs. Marshall, who seemed to have been thinking very deeply

during this last speech, "I think men always look so much better in morning costume; now you are not badly drest, but certainly morning dress for men is much more becoming."

Steinberg laughed; Helen was looking towards him, and their eyes met; they seemed as if they understood what each other thought.

"And, by the by, what is this Sir Edward?" asked Steinberg; "you said a Baronet,—what is a Baronet? a little Baron?"

"A very little Baron," said Helen.

"Oh, Helen! Helen!" cried Mrs. Marshall.

They walked on to a summer-house built on the edge of the canal, and curtained down to the water's brim with weeping willows.

"Now," said Mrs. Marshall, as they entered it, "the moon is rising, and you must sing me a German song."

"Music and moonlight,—you are so sentimental, Madam. Miss Merton laughs as if she did not think you deserved the character.

But here comes my uncle to tell you he is ready for tea, and I am glad of it, for I cannot sing of the ‘ Fatherland ’ to-night.”

“ Now, Eric,” said Mrs. Marshall, after tea, “ why are you tossing the things about in my unhappy work-box ? Just like men ! what do you want ? ”

“ A pencil, Madam.”

“ Here is one.”

“ I cannot use a silver pencil.”

“ Here is a better one ; only let me see your fingers out of my box. Oh ! a knife, — there, — now I hope you mean to take a very flattering likeness of me.”

“ Ernestine is in a pretty attitude. I wish to sketch her.”

“ Very well ; she goes to bed in three quarters of a minute, — so, presto ! ”

“ It is done.” —

“ Then let me look at it.”

“ *Excusez*, Madam ”

“ Indeed ! I will see it ; come ! ”

“ It is not finished.”

“ Nonsense ! Well,” said Mrs. Marshall, as she gained possession of the drawing—“ if I ever—look here, Helen !” She handed the paper across the table to her.

Helen looked ; she could not mistake it ;—it was herself.

“ It is not Ernestine,” said she smiling, as she quietly gave the sketch back to Steinberg.

“ How superior, how natural !” said he, in a low voice to Mrs. Marshall ; “ are there many women in England like her ?”

“ No,” returned Gertrude.

“ I want Eric and Helen to sing us a duet,” said she, after a short pause ; “ that beautiful thing, ‘ *Mira la bianca Luna.*’ ”

Sir Edward was very indignant to hear Helen’s name coupled as it were with Steinberg’s ; he sat by in moody silence, watching her as she sang.

Perhaps few people could better bear watching. She rose quietly and went to the piano to

sing the duet, and as soon as it was finished, she returned to her work: merely making a slight bow to Steinberg for his accompaniment.

Sir Edward took a chair a little behind hers; a sort of love-making position. Helen worked on, and would not look at him.

“Thank you for your song,” he said.

“You are quite welcome,” replied Helen, coldly.

“I had rather, I confess, have heard you alone.”

“And still more rather, not have heard me at all, I should think,” replied Helen.

“And why not? I cannot conceive why you should think so.”

Helen smiled, and began quoting in a low voice—

“The man who hath not music in his soul.”

“Really Miss Merton,” said Sir Edward, “you are too severe; but I will not be angry. I am in a marvellous good temper to-night.”

“Do you keep a score?” asked Helen, “and chalk up one good day against five or six bad ones.”

“I will be patient,” said he, half laughing; “but I can assure you, since I have had the pleasure of knowing you, my temper has much improved.”

“Dear me!” she exclaimed, in a tone that could not be mistaken to mean anything but *what could it have been before?*

“It is a fact,” said he.

“Not the force of example,” returned Helen; “but whatever may be my defects of temper, I never descend to the absurdity of being sulky.”

“Do I?” asked Sir Edward.

“Don’t press for an answer,” returned Helen. “I see no merit in telling disagreeable truths.”

“It is in vain for you to try to annoy me,” said he; “whatever you say is charming.”

Helen busied herself in threading her needle,

and then replied that it was "very provoking."

"What was?"

"To be so deficient in expression, as not to be disagreeable when one wished it."

Sir Edward did not seem to think her in earnest. When he rose to take leave, he told Mrs. Marshall, that he should invite himself there to spend the next day; he looked at Helen as he spoke, not doubting the pleasure she would receive from the arrangement. In a worldly point of view he would be a great match for her, and what other point of view is there in which to contemplate such things?

CHAPTER XIV.

With fawning wordes he courted her a while ;

* * * * *

But wordes, and lookes, and sighes she did abhore ;

As rock of diamond stedfast evermore.

SPENSER.

MRS. MARSHALL and Helen were excellent friends, although no two persons could be more opposite in their tastes and pursuits. But although Helen placed the most perfect reliance on Gertrude's kindness of disposition, she by no means acceded to her extraordinary method of passing her time. By extraordinary, however, I must be understood to mean rather unaccountable than unusual. Her whole day was spent in paying or receiving

visits, a diversion that was peculiarly annoying to Helen; but Mrs. Marshall said it was a sacrifice that people owed to society, and certainly there never was a more willing victim than herself.

Then she never was seen to take up a book, except on a rainy morning, and then she took care to get hold of one that was handsomely bound, and that went well with the dress she was wearing. So Helen effected an entrance into Colonel Marshall's study, which was stored with a good deal of curious old literature, and there made herself very comfortable.

Now it happened that this morning was a day for paying visits, and Mrs. Marshall asked Steinberg to drive her in her pony carriage, for there were fifty people he ought to be introduced to, and she fortunately was in debt to every one of them for a call.

Gertrude brought her worsted work into the study until it was time to set out, and there

employed herself in working her pattern into an inextricable mess, which she kindly left for Helen to put to rights, if she could: and if not, to cut it all out, taking care not to cut the canvass. This she promised to do, and as soon as Gertrude and Steinberg had set off, she sat down to inspect her puzzle.

Colonel Marshall had gone out to some farm that he mis-managed, and Helen was alone in the house. Even in summer-time there is rather a desolate feeling in being left in an empty house, particularly as the servants always choose to be remarkably merry on such occasions, and make such a tumult, that a rebellion seems to have broken out in the lower regions.

Helen soon found that the work must all come out; and the only thing left her was to get it undone as fast as possible, no easy task, while the canvass was to be preserved.

Busy as she was, she saw some one pass the window; she knew directly that it was Sir Edward Falconer, and she then remembered that

he was coming to spend the day there; she only hoped that he did not expect her to amuse him until the others returned.

Presently, she heard the servant tell him that no one was at home, and his reply as he walked across the hall, that he would wait in the Colonel's study.

There was no time for Helen to escape; he had entered.

"It is an unexpected pleasure to find you here," he said.

"Quite," said Helen dryly.

"You seem very much engaged," said he.

"I am indeed," said she; "every stitch of this border must come out."

Sir Edward said he pitied her; and Helen noticed that he seemed, contrary to his habit, to be a good deal flurried.

"I am not without consolation, however," said she, "for I am reading Campbell's exquisite 'Gertrude of Wyoming,' all the time."

“ Can you then read and work ? ” said Sir Edward, after a short pause.

“ Yes, poetry ; because that will bear being read in snatches — a line between every stitch.

“ I never saw — ” Sir Edward began, but he did not finish his sentence.

Helen looked up ; she began to feel rather nervous.

“ There,” said she, making an effort to break the silence ; “ half my task done ! How industrious I have been ! ”

“ You are always active in exerting yourself for others,” he said.

“ How did you find that out ? ” asked Helen.

“ I have had the pleasure of your acquaintance for some time now,” said he, “ and during that time I have observed you attentively.”

“ It is a habit of yours,” said Helen ; “ you observe everybody.”

“ But I never observed any one with so

much delight," said Sir Edward, " for I never before saw a woman so unconscious of her beauty, so utterly forgetful of herself."

Helen opened her eyes in amazement; Sir Edward had broken the ice, and into his subject he plunged. Before she had time to collect her thoughts, he had thrown himself and his fortune at her feet: that is to say, as far as words went; for Helen found nothing at all at her feet, and Sir Edward standing a little way off, expecting his answer.

A deadly sickness came over her; she thought of Anne, and of all that she would suffer in finding herself so cruelly deceived.

Sir Edward, believing of course, that she was overpowered with joy, hastened towards her; she knew that she must speak, and by a strong effort she commanded herself.

" I am astonished beyond measure," she cried: " from the first moment of our acquaintance to the present time, you have scarcely addressed a civil word to me; never

paid me the courtesy which every woman claims of a gentleman. If you are serious in your present declaration, you have taken a strange method to preface it, and one that must leave you little surprised at your total want of success. Allow me to pass you."

"Stay," he said; "if my manners offend you, will not the devotion of my heart atone for them?—give me at least time to work a change in your feelings,—let me appeal to your compassion for a gentler verdict."

"If you had ever attempted to win my regard by a single word," said Helen, "my reply might have been so far different that I should have thanked you for the expression of sentiments that I was unable to return; but you have so plainly marked your dislike of me throughout your acquaintance, that your present behaviour becomes an offensive mockery."

"May I ask," said he, looking keenly at her, "if your affections are engaged?"

Now it is always usual for ladies to beg to know if that is a question which the gentleman has any right to ask?—but Helen thought that a more reasonable question could not well be put, since the probability of his future success rested upon the knowledge of this fact.

She told him plainly that her affections were not engaged,—that her refusal was founded on the simple fact of her not liking him, and that what she had seen of his disposition convinced her that her present feelings could undergo no change.

“ You object to my temper,” said Sir Edward hastily ; “ grant me but a moment, not to vindicate myself, but to explain to you that my irritability is the result of circumstances, and may therefore by circumstances be overcome. When I was very young—too young to know of what base stuff this world is composed, I fell into the society of some men who were addicted, in a fearful degree, to the vice of gaming. I lost, until I impaired my for-

tune very considerably — it was to the firmness and affection of my mother, that I owe my present condition. She went into my affairs, retrenched my expenses, and without my knowledge, sacrificed part of her jointure to pay my debts of honour.”

“ Like her !” said Helen, with tears in her eyes.

“ Still more like herself, she did not attempt to exact from me a promise that I would relinquish gaming — and I was not so unworthy of her, but that I felt this confidence to be a more solemn claim upon my forbearance than the strongest oath. But my impressions of my early friends were so bitter that I have hitherto looked upon mankind with too prejudiced an eye. It was your acquaintance that first softened my view of life ; do not cancel the good you have done ; do not condemn me to a second, and a heavier blow. It is in your power to make me all you could wish.”

Sir Edward showed very considerable skill

in trying to excite Helen's pity, because we all know that in such cases there is nothing like it.

She addressed him in a milder tone. She said, she was sorry that he had imagined for a moment that she countenanced, or was aware of his addresses ; that he could not better repair his mistake than by transferring his regard to some person more likely to secure his happiness.

He begged for a little time.

“ No, Sir Edward,” said Helen ; “ no time can efface my impression of the unfair manner in which you have dealt with me. Was it to ascertain my sentiments that you had recourse to the poor expedient of paying my sister the most undeviating attention—was it to wound my pride—was it to gratify your own ? Suppose that she had taken for earnest your exaggerated homage,—how could you atone for her injured peace,—how answer to yourself

for the paltry feigning that had for its object so miserable a success ?”

He stood silent,—his motives tracked, searched—exposed—perhaps he was not sorry, for the moment, that she had refused him,—a woman should not be *too* clear-sighted. But Helen left the room as she spoke, and Sir Edward, extremely crest-fallen, took up his hat, and made the best of his way home.

CHAPTER XV.

She is with persevering strength endued,
And can be cheerful—for she will be good.

CRABBE.

THREE days had passed since their return from town, and Anne had seen nothing of Sir Edward Falconer. She became, contrary to her usual disposition, peevish, and dissatisfied about trifles.

Helen was uncertain what course to pursue with her, sometimes thinking that she would wear out the remembrance of him better if she remained in ignorance of the causes of his departure, sometimes wishing to come at once to a full explanation, and rely upon the sense which she knew Anne to possess, to soften the shock which she must at first experience.

One day it had been raining until the afternoon, and the sisters had not been able to walk out. Anne had been very impatient all day, and had refused to attend to anything. As soon as the rain cleared off, she begged her mamma to allow her to take a walk directly.

“No, my dear,” said Mrs. Merton, “you cannot think of going out while the ground is so wet; just look into the garden, you will see that the water is running down the paths.”

She was leaving the room as she spoke, and she closed the door behind her as she finished her sentence. Anne seemed very much agitated—she walked hastily up and down the room, chafing herself into a passion.

“Mamma does not know what she refuses me!” she said, “I cannot live without exercise,—I must have it,—I am stifled for want of air!”

“Dear Anne,” said Helen, coming up to her, “do try to compose yourself; you are quite flushed.”

“No wonder, in this room;” said Anne, throwing open the casement. “Helen, I cannot sit still!”

“Anne,” said Helen, putting her arm round her, “let me ask you a question.”

Anne fixed her eyes on her sister in silence.

“I have been afraid,” said Helen, “sometimes, that you—that Sir Edward’s visits were becoming of too much interest to you.”

“And why, ‘too much?’” said Anne drawing a little back, and looking at her sister with a terrified expression.

“Because, dear Anne,” said Helen; “I fear that he does not love you.”

“Not love me!” cried Anne, throwing back her curls with one hand, and gazing at Helen with dilated eyes; “and how do you know that?”

“Anne,” said Helen, turning paler and paler, “I know that he has offered his hand to another.”

Anne paused a moment, wavered — and then

fell heavily into her sister's arms, but she did not faint—her sobs rose thick and fast, and the tears rushed from her half closed eyes.

Helen covered her forehead with kisses, but she did not speak, for what consolation was there for her to offer?

For some time she lay helpless in Helen's arms; then raising herself up, she said in a feeble voice, "Helen, what *can* I do?"

"Forget him," said Helen; "he is not worthy one sigh from a heart like yours."

"It is so hard, Helen," said Anne; "I have thought of nothing else for such a long time."

"It is a blow," said Helen, "but overcome it; remember that yours is a grief for which the world has no sympathy; yours is the mistake of a pure heart, too much belief,—it is enough to make people laugh, if they knew it."

"That they shall not," said Anne; "do you think, Helen, mamma knows it?"

"No," said Helen.

"I shall not tell her then," said Anne; "it

would only grieve her, and do me no good. Helen, has he been quite honest with me?"

"No," said Helen; "he has played a most treacherous part; but dear Anne, think how much better to suffer than to inflict the wrong, and of all fraud, there is none baser than the intangible falsehood by which a man deceives the heart of a trusting woman. Only, when it is discovered, surely all affection towards such a person must cease at once."

"But the mistake—the shame—O Helen, the injury," said Anne, throwing herself into her sister's arms; "I only wish I could lie down and die quietly with your hand in mine."

"Don't say so, dearest," said Helen, moved to tears; "think of our mother."

"I will conquer it," said Anne, standing up; "don't speak to me, or follow me; I will be quite alone." She left the room, and Helen obeyed her directions. She saw nothing of her until dinner time.

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It was evident that Anne had not spent the interval in tears, for her eyes bore no traces of those she had shed ; but she looked paler than she had ever done in her life.

It was then that the latent strength which exists in every character where self is predominant, began to display itself in Anne's conduct.

She saw that she had made a mistake, the most humbling that can be committed by a delicate woman, but her sister taught her to think that it was not irretrievable. She was careful to employ herself constantly, for when people's thoughts must of necessity be painful, it is reasonable that they should give themselves as little time as may be for thinking : she took a great deal of exercise, accompanied by Helen, who devoted herself entirely to her comfort. By and by she began to take an interest in her pursuits — she found it a matter of great importance that the later flowers of the summer should blow well, and that the garden should not look so very untidy after the July rains.

Helen was a capital gardener, and enticed her by degrees to take part in many projects, which she would never have formed for herself.

Helen encouraged her to apply to literature, which she had never done hitherto — she won her on to study poetry, then history ; and Anne, who was not very fond of fictitious literature, took a good deal of interest in this sort of reading.

Then Anne applied herself diligently to the study of music. She improved wonderfully in singing, and playing ; and worked very hard to overcome the difficulties of execution. Helen, who played very well, was always at hand to give her any help she might require.

In a few weeks she had begun to recover her former liveliness — she no longer regretted her delusion,—she saw that she had gained improvement by it, and she agreed with Helen, that Sir Edward had always been unworthy of her regard.

Mrs. Merton was often remarking, how very

much Anne had lately grown like her sister ; there was so much more energy and character in her appearance than there used to be ; and she was really quite fond of reading now, which was an astonishing change.

“ After all, Helen,” said Anne, one day, when contrary to her usual custom she had been sitting thinking for some time, “ I have grown a great deal wiser lately. How I could think Sir Edward ever meant anything, now puzzles me, because he said so very little ; but then manner can be made to speak, you know.”

“ His did plainly enough,” said Helen ; “ don’t try to defend him, my dear Anne.”

“ But Helen,” said Anne, “ do you know who it is he is going to marry ? ”

“ No,” said Helen ; some vague feeling that she could hardly define prevented her from being more explicit.

CHAPTER XVI.

Syl. I —

I thought, when you did stay abroad so long,
And never sent nor asked of me or mine,
You'd quite forgotten —

Jer. Speak again —

Was't so, indeed !

BARRY CORNWALL.

THERE was a grand ball held annually at the town near Wargrave, and the time for it was drawing on. All the county families attended it, and therefore it was very difficult for the people in the village to get tickets. Poor Mrs. Clapton endured indignities that would have graced a martyr, that she might obtain an admission for her girls. Every mother hoping, of course, to effect an establishment by that means for her daughter, because, perhaps, once

in the course of a long life she remembered to have heard that some lady had won the heart of some rich gentleman at a county ball.

Mrs. Merton was offered tickets by the Marshalls, and the whole village united to pronounce her a very designing woman.

“ I do not wish to go, mamma,” said Helen, when the cards were sent to them; “ you know late hours never agree with me.”

“ Oh ! if I might,” said Anne, looking imploringly in her mother’s face.

“ You are too young, my dear,” said Mrs. Merton; “ but I think, Helen, you had better go — we have seldom opportunities of this kind in the country, and I should be glad that you did not renounce gaiety through ignorance, but from a knowledge of the greater pleasures of retirement.”

“ Very well, mamma,” said Helen, “ then I will go and take a lesson at the R—— ball.”

“ What will you wear, Helen ? Do go in white satin,” cried Anne.

“Do, my dear, if you like it,” said Mrs. Merton.

“Oh, no, thank you,” said Helen.

“Mamma can afford it, Helen,” said Anne.

“You need not think of the expense, my dear,” said her mother.

“Thank you, my dear mamma,” said Helen; “but I know that money cannot be spent in two ways; and if you give me a satin dress you will buy fewer books for yourself. I don’t wish my lesson to be too expensive.”

Nothing would induce Helen to alter her determination, and Mrs. Merton said that they had better walk to the Marshalls and arrange everything before the heat of the day. On their way thither they met Mrs. Grubb.

“Well,” said she, “I hear you have tickets for the R—— ball.” Her information was astonishing, for they had only received their cards an hour ago.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Merton. “Mrs. Marshall was so kind as to send them.”

“ Ah ! glad I dare say to get rid of them,” said Mrs. Grubb ; “ the ball will be very badly attended this year, I find.”

“ Indeed ! ” said Mrs. Merton. Helen only laughed.

“ Yes, the Cowpers don’t mean to go, and they set the fashion hereabouts,” said Mrs. Grubb, importantly.

“ So they ought, — they have much the largest house,” returned Helen.

“ You may think so, Miss Merton,” replied Mrs. Grubb ; “ but some people consider birth and connection, and that sort of thing, as — ”

“ Straws,” Helen could not help saying, while Mrs. Grubb was looking about for a phrase of sufficient magnitude.

“ I did not expect to hear such radical principles from a young lady,” retorted Mrs. Grubb.

“ Helen could not have been in earnest,” said Mrs. Merton, suppressing a smile.

“ And are *you* going, my dear ? ” said Mrs. Grubb, turning to Anne.

“ No,” said Anne, looking vexed.

“ Oh ! dear, Mrs. Merton, you ought to take her,” said Mrs. Grubb ; “ just the age to enjoy such things, poor child ! I do hope you will take her.”

If Helen had replied to this speech it would not have been so smoothly ; but Mrs. Merton only said,—

“ I am sure Anne trusts me so far as to know that I only deprive her of present pleasure for her future benefit.”

“ But only once a year,” said Mrs. Grubb ; “ and perhaps next year you may not be able to get tickets ; I dare say not, indeed, for they are getting more and more select.”

Anne began to look discontented.

“ Pray have *you* a card, Mrs. Grubb ? ” asked Helen.

“ Oh no ; I have done with balls,” replied that lady with a very vinegar aspect.

“ Oh ! that accounts for it ! ” said Helen.

Mrs. Grubb hastily wished them good morning, and went down the village to find somebody to whom she might abuse them. Helen was a Radical, and, she dared say, a Socinian, for those two things generally went together ; and Mrs. Merton a tyrant, who would be repaid for it one day in the ingratitude of both her children.

Mrs. Marshall, with more consideration, told Anne that her turn for such doings would come in time, and then she would enjoy them all the more for not having entered into them too soon.

The day came at last for the ball. Helen in her white muslin dress looked so radiant, that even Anne allowed that finery could do nothing for her. Mrs. Merton, little as she valued such distinctions, could not help feeling rather pleased at the remarks which constantly reached her ear upon the singular beauty of her daughter, yet I must here do

young men, as a body, the justice to say that their commendations are not generally of a nature to induce great vanity in the mind of a refined woman, since the quality of their applause is precisely that which they bestow on a horse which pleases them. They are not aware of the fact that a woman has a soul, and if her limbs are well made, and accurately put together, they honour her with an offensive stare, and with the vulgar approbation of the stable yard.

The Mertons walked up the room in search of Mrs. Marshall's party. On their way, they passed the de Burghs, and Lady de Burgh just recognised Helen.

Miss de Burgh had entirely forgotten her,—Mr. de Burgh put up his eye-glass, and said aloud that she was a very fine girl.

Colonel Marshall had a headache, and stayed at home, not sorry of the excuse, Gertrude said ; but he entrusted her to his nephew, who, she hoped, meant to take great care of her. Then

she repeated to Helen many of the opinions she had heard passed upon her, and Steinberg looked on as if curious to see the effect they would produce.

Helen's face looked like fine marble, for she was very pale, and not a feature stirred during the recital.

If she had been vain, she would have found the insufficiency of mere beauty, at a ball like this, especially of a lofty cast. Helen looked like a person who would not trifle, and could not be trifled with; and her rank was not sufficient to make it an *éclat* to dance with her.

She sat for some time without being asked to dance, but quite contentedly, looking at the different groups, and listening to the music, which was very good.

At the close of every quadrille Mrs. Marshall came up to her, and asked her why she did not dance; it was very naughty of her to be so idle. As Helen had not quite a voice

in the matter, she merely laughed off the question. Soon afterwards Steinberg came up to them, and asked Helen if he was so happy as to find her disengaged? — She said she was, and he begged her to dance with him.

As they took their places in the quadrille, he said that he had hardly hoped to be so fortunate; he expected to have found her engaged by Sir Edward Falconer.

Helen started. — “Is he here?” she said.

“What! have you not seen him then?” asked Steinberg.

“No,” said Helen blushing; “I had no idea that he would be here.” She looked annoyed beyond measure.

Sir Edward passed her at the moment; Steinberg saw a cold bow exchanged between them.

After the quadrille, Steinberg sat down beside Helen, and began talking to her and Mrs. Merton.

“Miss de Burgh expects you to ask her to dance, Eric,” said Mrs. Marshall, in one of her periodical visitations to the corner where the Mertons were seated.

“Very well,” said Steinberg; “she will find herself mistaken.”

“There, she is disengaged now,” said Mrs. Marshall.

“I am not going to dance with her,” said he, taking up his conversation again with Helen.

“Do you know, Helen,” said Mrs. Marshall, “that Mrs. Grubb was almost on her knees to me for a ticket, and I had not one left.”

“Fortunate for the people here,” said Helen; “how many matches she would have coined.”

“She is a charming woman,” said Steinberg. “I understand that she says everywhere I am an immoral character, because early one very hot morning she saw me riding through the village in a straw-hat.”

“And a blouze, Eric; don’t forget that,”

said Mrs. Marshall, "so very *odd*, as she always says."

"What an idea you will carry back with you of the English women," said Helen, laughing.

"I shall indeed," said Steinberg, fixing his eyes upon her.

Steinberg sat beside Helen till supper-time; they neither of them talked much. A little while before they went into the supper-room, Steinberg seeing Helen look very abstracted, said, "how very much he should like to find out what she was thinking of."

"Do you know," said she, "that I was saying over some of the multiplication table; a strange occupation, but it is getting so late that I am quite sleepy."

Steinberg asked her to dance the first quadrille after supper; she agreed to it. He took her in to supper, and nearly opposite to them sat Sir Edward, in a very particular fit of ill-humour. The ladies withdrew, and the gentlemen began to eat astonishingly. Mr. de

Burgh took Steinberg to the other side of the room to expatiate on the merits of some pink champagne.

A party of young men round Sir Edward were teasing him about a horse that he meant to sell.

“If you sell Zeluco,” said one of them, speaking slow, “you will repent it as long as you live — you will never get such another.”

“Sell Zeluco!” said Mr. Tom Saville: “I won’t buy him because he has such a trick of stopping of himself at Mrs. Merton’s gate. I suppose no power on earth could get him past the Mertons’?”

“Ah! we are all the creatures of habit!” said young Rush, looking very wise; he was getting decidedly “happy.”

“After all, Edward, which is it to be?” asked Mr. Tom Saville; “the pretty little angel, or that Semiramis her sister, who I vow

is a very terrific person — tell us, that's a good fellow."

Sir Edward was almost strangled at being addressed in this way by a man for whom he had a profound contempt: and the few words which he contrived to stammer out were inarticulate.

"I declare, I should not mind marrying the little one if the connexion was good enough," pursued Mr. Saville; "but I would rather die than have the other, even if she was Duchess of York."

"Miss Merton would grace a throne," said young Rush, who had always admired her extremely at church.

"Certainly, on the stage," said Mr. Saville; "a regular tragedy queen."

"By the by, what are her ankles like?" said young Rush.

"Pretty good," said Mr. Saville; "I saw her get over a stile at De Burgh's."

"Gentlemen!" said a voice close to them,

“ a lady’s name should not be discussed so freely.”

Sir Edward turned, and saw Eric Steinberg. Although he had taken no part in the discussion,—and it had indeed been quite as repugnant to his feelings as to Steinberg’s,—he thought this an excellent occasion to give vent to his ill temper, and therefore he replied haughtily that he was ill-disposed to regulate his conduct by the advice of a foreign adventurer.

“ Sir ! ” exclaimed Steinberg, drawing himself up.

Sir Edward repeated what he had said.

Steinberg looked at him from head to foot, and then walked away.

Sir Edward muttered disdainfully that he was a pitiful wretch.

“ No such thing,” said Mr. Saville earnestly ; “ I saw his eye ; you will hear from him before morning.”

“ We shall see,” returned Sir Edward,

smiling haughtily. As the dance was about to commence, Helen saw Steinberg crossing the ball-room. As he came near her party, she made a sign to him.

“Are you going away?” she asked.

“Oh! no,” said he; “I left my gloves in the card-room, and I am going to look for them. I will be with you in an instant.”

He went into the hall, and wrote a few pencil lines to Colonel Marshall, explaining what had occurred, and saying that as soon as he could leave the ballroom, he should come home and learn his uncle’s decision upon the step he ought to take.

Having given his note to a waiter, he returned to the ball-room and went through the quadrille with Helen. As he was leading her back to her seat, he encountered Sir Edward; Helen saw a look exchanged between them of such defiance that she thought it impossible to mistake it.

It was not her business to notice it, but yet,

perhaps she might prevent something serious by a few words, and to a mere acquaintance why should she hesitate.

“ I must seem rude to advise you, Mr. Steinberg,” she said ; “ but some slight experience of the *agaçeries* of a gentleman present, leads me to hope that you will take them for just as much as they are worth. If you were an Englishman I should never think of saying this, but we always fancy foreigners so helpless.”

“ You are,” said Steinberg after a short pause, “ so beautifully endowed with the most exquisite qualities of your sex, that I need attribute your interest to nothing but humanity,—if—if I dared,——”

“ Surely,” said Helen, “ without any romantic attributes, I may feel more interest in your fate than in that of a perfect stranger, knowing you to be so justly esteemed by my friends the Marshalls.”

He sat down beside her, and for some time

seemed absorbed in making out the Chinese figures upon her ivory fan.

Just then, one of the stewards who had been almost compelling Sir Edward to say he would dance, brought him to Helen as a partner.

She declined dancing.

“There,” said she, turning to the Baron; “now do you know that I have condemned myself to sit still for the rest of the night; we can only escape a disagreeable partner under such heavy penalties—such is our barbarous English custom.”

Helen spoke gaily, but looking at Steinberg she was surprised at the agitation visible in his countenance, and she stopped abruptly.

“When I first came to England,” he said, plunging into his subject without a word of preparation, “it was natural that my first inquiry should be about you, and they told me that you were engaged to Sir Edward Falconer.”

Helen was too much astonished to speak—

a light flashed on her mind,—had Steinberg spoken for hours he could not more fully have explained his conduct.

She turned away her head, for she felt that her face was radiant with delight.

“From the time of my first seeing you,” said Steinberg, “you have been alone present to my heart; you were my inspiration,—all that I ever achieved was owing to the memory of your grace,—and though I held you enshrined in my dreams of the past, I was not surprised to learn that you had given yourself to another—I was only grieved: for it was not strange that you should have forgotten me in those four years, since I had no claims on your memory, no means of recalling myself to your remembrance. You had accepted the homage my manner expressed, as the incense due to the divinity of your beauty,—and more than distant admiration I had not then dared to offer. It was my fault if I cherished the wild hope of finding you still to be won—

you would have been constant to a shadow, if you had waited those four silent years."

Helen was still silent, all wonder.

"And yet," continued Steinberg, "there were times when the homage I had ventured to direct to you, I remembered had not been disdained, and that, young as you were, the sincere language of another heart could not be quite strange to your own; then I thought that one so noble as you were in all other things would never be false even in a glance, when your eyes might be fraught with life or death to your worshippers."

"Never," said Helen, distinctly.

"Then you did understand me?"

"*Then* I did," said Helen.

"Sir Edward?"—

"Was always hateful to me; I cannot tell why you should fix upon him."

"You are not changed?"

"Only thus far, that finding myself mistaken in my opinion of your feelings, I subdued a weakness which ——"

“ Oh ! stop there,” said Steinberg ; “ let me declare a thousand times that all the devotion which I could express was weak compared with that I felt, and feel.”

Helen was silent.

“ If — if I dare to go on,” said he, “ this moment will be the brightest of my life.” He looked earnestly in her face,—her eyes were fixed on the ground,—she raised, a very little, her hand,—he clasped it in his own.

Soon afterwards Mrs. Marshall came up to them, leaning on the arm of a gentleman — some partner in the last waltz ; she was laughing and talking with him, but Helen heard no word of what she said. She said something to Steinberg, and they all rose and went into the cloak-room — Mrs. Merton with them ; yet Helen was surprised to find herself there, she seemed dreaming ; she only knew that Steinberg still held her hand ; once or twice she felt that his fingers pressed hers more closely. Mrs. Merton found her daughter’s shawl ; and Mrs.

Marshall laughed, and rallied Steinberg on his want of gallantry.

It was not till he had handed Helen into the carriage, that she recollected he had not arranged to see her on the morrow; yet she thought, that could be of no importance; she would be so sure to see him then.

“ Well, Eric,” said Mrs. Marshall, leaning back in the carriage, and wrapping her velvet mantle more closely round her, —“ it is very chilly; won’t you draw up that window?—how do you like our English parties?”

“ Yes, Madam,” he replied vacantly.

“ Yes, Madam! Why, you are in love, Eric! I vow you are. I am so glad of it!” said Mrs. Marshall, laughing merrily.

“ Are you?” he said.

“ Yes; now I am sure I could find out in three guesses who it is;—may I try?”

“ Oh! no,” said he, trying to rouse himself: “ you are quite mistaken.”

“ Well, if I was not so sleepy, I would

take the trouble to find it out, but as it is, I shall wish you good night till we get home."

"Good night," said Steinberg, sighing.

Gertrude stopped to laugh at his sigh, and then sank back into the corner of the carriage.

Steinberg looked up into the sky; the moon poured a flood of soft light over the meadows, and lit up the river, as it glanced here and there through the trees that overhung its banks.

The stars were growing faint beneath the approach of morning. All was so very calm that unconsciously his thoughts became more tranquil.

"Helen might be his, but for the morrow;" this idea returned again and again upon his mind, until he felt weary of the words.

The carriage stopped at last, and he handed Mrs. Marshall out and followed her into the hall.

"Colonel Marshall is not sitting up, I hope," said she to the servant.

“ Oh no, Ma'am ; he went to bed soon after twelve,” said the man.

“ Very well : will you take anything ? ”

“ No.”

“ Good night, Eric,” said Mrs. Marshall, and she hurried up stairs.

“ Have you no letter for me ? ” said Eric to his servant.

“ No, sir.”

“ Nor any message from my uncle ? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ Strange ! and he is gone to bed ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ I hope he is not ill ? ” said Steinberg.

“ I believe not, sir,” said the man.

“ Very well, I don't want you to-night ; you may go to bed,” said Steinberg, going into his room.

“ I must act for myself,” he said, as he walked slowly across the room : “ the Colonel could not have received my note, and I know nothing of the way in which these matters

are settled in England. I wanted his advice about ——”

He started, and stopped short. The Colonel's own pistols were laid on his table ; not a word of any sort accompanied them. He had received his nephew's message, and there was his reply.

CHAPTER XVII.

Count. Now justice on the doers !

SHAKSPEARE.

THE next morning, as soon as Helen opened her eyes, Anne was at her bedside with a hundred eager questions. How did she like the ball ? — Who were her partners ? — How was Mrs. Marshall dressed ? — Did she wear the blue satin at last, or the white crape ? — Did Mr. Steinberg waltz well ? — Would Helen have her breakfast in bed, or get up ? ”

Helen answered the last question by beginning to dress, and then replied to all Anne’s inquiries respecting dresses and partners.

“ And you only danced with Mr. Steinberg,” said Anne, pausing and looking earnestly in her sister’s face.

“ Oh ! Helen, Helen,” she cried, throwing

her arms round her neck ; “ I have guessed a long time, that — though you seemed to take so little notice of each other — can you tell what I guessed ! ”

Helen did not say no.

“ Have you told Mamma, Helen ? ” asked Anne.

“ All that I had to tell her, dearest,” said Helen smiling, “ which seemed not much, when it was put into words.”

“ And what did she say ? ”

“ She was very happy on my account, and too generous to think at all of herself.”

“ I must hear a great deal more about this,” said Anne, “ but I am in a great hurry to get down stairs to breakfast. Mamma was almost ready when I came to you.”

Anne seemed quite restored to her usual spirits ; she laughed and talked all breakfast time, was still very inquisitive about the dresses, and almost quarrelled with Helen for not recollecting how Miss de Burgh’s hair was ornamented.

Anne always spent a great deal of time at

the breakfast-table ; and to-day, with all these inquiries pending, she loitered over her water-cresses until her Mamma was obliged to call her to order, and have the things cleared.

The gate bell rang violently.

Mrs. Merton turned with a smile to Helen. Anne remarked mischievously how very impatient some people seemed, she didn't see why people need pull the bell down. Downs would say that he could not move faster than he could ; ring as they might.

Helen smiled and blushed.

The door was thrown open, and Colonel Marshall, as pale as death, almost rushed into the room.

" My dear Colonel," said Mrs. Merton, rising to meet him ; " I am sure something is the matter ; pray tell me."

" Don't be alarmed," he said. " I am come to beg that you will be so kind as to go down directly to Gertrude, who is in great distress. My poor nephew was brought home this morning desperately wounded in a duel with Sir Edward Falconer."

A shriek from Anne interrupted him. Helen half rose, and taking both her sister's hands in hers, drew her down on the sofa beside her.

Anne laid her head on Helen's shoulder, and burst into a violent fit of crying.

"Oh! poor Mrs. Marshall!" she exclaimed, as well as her sobs would permit her: "Oh! how very shocking! — Poor Mr. Steinberg! — Oh! dear! dear! what dreadful things do happen! — Poor Mrs. Marshall!"

Helen need not have feared that she would have discovered too much interest in Sir Edward.

Mrs. Merton went out of the room directly to put on her things.

"When did this happen?" said Anne, still crying.

"About seven this morning, he was brought to us," said Colonel Marshall.

"Do you know why they quarrelled?" asked Anne.

"No, I have heard nothing. Eric is quite insensible."

Anne shuddered.

“Don’t you think?” she asked, after a pause, “that he will recover?”

The Colonel shook his head.

“And where is Sir Edward?” said Helen, in a voice so altered that Anne scarcely recognised it.

“I hope he is on his way to the Continent; there is no use in his remaining here; the seconds have escaped.”

Mrs. Merton came in at the moment.

Helen understood the close pressure of her mother’s hand, the lingering embrace, — but she was unable to return them. She turned her eyes towards the door as the Colonel led Mrs. Merton out, and a thick mist seemed to hang before her, their figures wavered and grew dim, and she sank slowly back in a swoon. Anne flew to her sister, and succeeded at last in restoring her. Helen thanked her directly she recovered, for not calling one of the servants to her assistance.

“If one must be foolish,” she said, “it had better be without any witnesses but those who feel for one so kindly as you do, dearest.”

The sisters went out into the garden, and wandered about in that desolate comfortless way which marks persons in distress or suspense.

About noon came a pencil note from Mrs. Merton, saying that Gertrude was so much agitated as to be unable to render any assistance to Steinberg, but that he remained insensible, and there was nothing to be done but to wait patiently the event.

“ Oh ! that cruel Sir Edward,” exclaimed Anne ; “ what right had he to make so many persons unhappy ?—I declare I hate him with my whole heart.”

“ But, my dear Anne,” said Helen, “ we do not know with whom the quarrel originated—I think it very likely that he felt himself compelled to atone for some impertinence by accepting a challenge.”

“ He might have refused,” said Anne.

“ I would not, if I were a man,” said Helen.

“ You know, Helen, it is very wicked,” Anne persisted.

“ I cannot argue it now,” said Helen, sighing,—“ but I regard this as I should a dreadful accident — unless I were to hear more particulars, bearing against Sir Edward.”

“ I hate him, that I do ! ” repeated Anne.

In the evening Colonel Marshall came down to say that Mrs. Merton remained with them that night, for his nephew was not expected to live till morning. He went immediately, and the sisters were left alone.

“ It is better than suspense,” said Helen, after a long pause.

“ He *may* live, Helen,” said Anne, — “ Oh ! if you would not look so desperately calm.”

“ I have no right to be otherwise,” said Helen ; “ people do not know that he was anything to me but a common acquaintance. Well, I can bear it so.”

She sat for some time with her hands clasped over her forehead.

“ I wish you would lie down,” said Anne ; “ I know by your eyes, how your head is aching.”

“ If you did not mind being left alone, dear

Anne, I would go up stairs, and lie down for half an hour," said Helen.

"Do, and try to sleep," said her sister.

Helen kissed her and left the room.

Anne drew a low chair to the French window which was half open, and leaned her head against one of the glass doors.

The wind was rising, and the evening was cold and dreary. Every gust scattered the leaves over the garden walks; the very sound of the waterfall, so refreshing in the height of summer, seemed now to carry something mournful in its hoarse cadence.

She pictured to herself a hundred fanciful shapes in the waving branches of the trees—at length, a dark figure which she at first had not distinguished from those shaped by the nodding boughs of the firs, came forward from the shrubbery and advanced to the house. Anne started up, and was just about to close the window, when she recognised Sir Edward Falconer.

"Do I frighten you?" he asked, as he approached.

“No,” said Anne trembling; “but I thought you were far away.”

“Tell me, I entreat you,” he said, “how is Steinberg? I cannot go to the house to inquire, and I cannot, I will not, trust the reports of the place.”

Anne hurriedly repeated the account which Colonel Marshall brought down to them.

“Great Heaven!” he exclaimed clasping his hands, “and this is my doing!”

“Yet there is always hope,” said Anne gently; “his fate is not certain. Indeed, you know if his wound had been mortal, it would have been decided at once—and if not——”

Sir Edward took hold of her hand, she quietly withdrew it, and went on. “If not, I cannot but trust that his youth will lend him strength to recover.”

“I am most unworthy of such kindness,” said Sir Edward: “that you have deigned to offer consolation to one so wretched, I shall remember—till——”

He could not command his voice to proceed.

“ But why are you here ? ” said Anne ;
“ surely you ought to have been on your road
to France long ago . ”

“ I wait the event , ” he replied .

“ And if it should be fatal ? ” exclaimed
Anne .

“ Still I wait , ” he said .

“ But your mother , ” — said Anne .

“ She thinks with me , that it is impossible
to do otherwise . ”

“ But if you should be apprehended ? ” said
Anne .

“ The crime is committed , — I cannot fly
from that , ” returned Sir Edward .

“ But the penalty , ” — she exclaimed .

“ I shall have deserved it , ” he replied .

Anne burst into tears .

“ Altogether , I have been so distressed and
shocked , to-day , ” she said , “ that the least
thing , you see , excites me . Hush ! — I hear
Helen coming . ”

He took her hand , raised it again and
again to his lips , and was lost in a moment
among the trees .

Then she bowed down her head and wept without restraint. Helen joined her soon after, and the two sisters went up into their room. Anne, completely worn out with excitement, soon fell asleep. Helen, unable to rest, walked up and down the room for hours. At last, quite overcome with fatigue, she sat down in a large arm-chair by the side of her sister's bed: Anne was in a heavy slumber, as people sleep who are suffering from any sorrow. The tears still glittered on her long eyelashes, and Helen could scarcely hear her quiet breathing. Gradually, as the night stole on towards morning, she sank back, and fell asleep herself. She was waked in the morning by hearing her own name called repeatedly,—Anne was sitting up in bed, and leaning over her, with a slip of paper in her hand.

“Helen, read—quick!—from Colonel Marshall's,” she cried.

With a strong effort Helen tore it open, fixed her eyes upon the writing, and uttered a sudden cry of joy. “It is his own hand!”

she cried—"he is recovering!—am I dreaming?—Read it Anne!"

Anne read.

"DEAREST HELEN,

"I am better—forgive me if I have caused you pain.—

"E. S."

Helen clasped her sister in her arms, and they wept for joy together.

The maid came in soon after to say that Mrs. Merton was come home—and Helen with those blotted and feeble lines in her hand, went down to meet her mother.

Her account was favourable. Ill as he was, he would, it was hoped, recover. As soon as he had been restored to consciousness he had insisted on writing two words to Helen, and against all advice he did so.

Every day came a note to Helen—at first scarcely legible, except to her—then plainer, then longer—then, half a volume, as Anne used to say, crammed into a sheet of paper, at

least if she might judge by the time Helen took in reading it.

Sir Edward had seen Steinberg alone, and what they had said or done nobody knew, but they were very good friends ever afterwards.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Last scene of all.

SHAKSPEARE.

EARLY in the autumn they all went down to the sea-side. Steinberg *pretended*, as Mrs. Marshall said, to live with them, but he spent all his time at Mrs. Merton's.

One evening the whole party were assembled on the beach. Steinberg and Helen talking apart, Colonel Marshall walking up and down the sands with Mrs. Merton, and Gertrude sometimes playing with a favourite spaniel, sometimes gossiping with little Anne.

"What book are you reading?" she exclaimed; "you are getting as bad as Helen, Miss Anne."

"Reading — Shakspeare," said Anne, shutting the book.

“ You know all this reading is so much time wasted,— a pretty woman need never trouble herself to learn anything — leave that to the plain ones.”

“ But why should pretty women be stupid,” said Anne.

“ Oh ! my dear, there is more eloquence in a fine pair of eyes, than all the logic in the world.”

Anne laughed, and shook her head.

“ By the by, Eric,” said Mrs. Marshall, “ did you think that horse quite safe which I rode to-day ?”

No answer.

“ How civil we are,” said Mrs. Marshall to Anne ; “ I wonder if Ernest was half so disagreeable before we were married. I shall look over my letters again, and you may go back to your book.”

Presently, Mrs. Marshall began again. “ Anne, do you know, the poor De Burghs are in such trouble ?”

“ Indeed ! I am sorry for it,” said Anne.

“ Trouble and joy mixed strangely together,”

said Mrs. Marshall. "A few days ago, Lord Stanmore proposed for their youngest daughter. Of course everybody was delighted beyond measure — such a match! well, the next morning, Miss de Burgh was missing — it was found that she had eloped with Mr. Tom Saville."

"Helen, do you hear this?" cried Anne; "you know the people."

"Hear, my love," said Mrs. Marshall, laughing; "she hears nothing — some people are privileged to be deaf. But the curious part of this match is, that old Saville is implacable, because the lady has no money, and Sir Clement (or rather Lady de Burgh, who is acting manager in that house) is equally furious, because the gentleman has no family: so how the young people are to live—"

"I wonder how?" said Anne.

"Not on love," said Mrs. Marshall, "for she ran away with young Saville from pique at Lord Stanmore's preferring her sister to herself — and of all people in the world, she is the least calculated to put up with any privations. Eric, where is your cloak — it is getting quite

cold — did not you bring it with you to the sea side ? ”

“ I suppose,” said Anne, laughing, “ that Mr. Steinberg still expects to be waited upon, but now that he is quite well he will find the difference.”

Steinberg laughed, and turned round at this attack.

“ Have you been asleep all this time, you two ? ” said Mrs. Marshall. “ Oh dear, I wish we had some other *beau*. I wish Sir Edward was here. He was always a great favourite of mine — until — and even now, since he has made up so handsomely with Eric. For there’s Eric all day long at Helen’s feet,— very proper and pleasant, I have no doubt,— Ernest always escorting about your pretty mamma, of whom I am more than half jealous — and you, my dear Anne, courting wrinkles over a crabbed book. I shall write and desire Sir Edward to come down here directly.”

“ Oh ! pray don’t, Mrs. Marshall,” said Helen, who caught the last part of the speech, “ we are all so happy and comfortable now.”

“ Yes, my dear, you are, I dare say,” said Mrs. Marshall; “ but it is for my especial service that I mean to invite Sir Edward. Who, I wonder,” said she, as they prepared to walk home, “ who is to carry my shawl, and my work-bag — this is a dreadful state of things.”

“ Pray let me, cousin,” said Steinberg.

“ Yes, and leave them at the first *jettée*, where you stop to show Helen the moon on the water — no, I must put up with this sort of treatment for the present.”

On their return home, the very first person they encountered was Sir Edward Falconer. He was going to pay a visit to a friend at Brighton, and he stopped on his way to see the Marshalls. Mrs. Marshall was delighted to welcome him; but some young officer coming in after tea, she sat down to a game at *piquet*, and handed him over to little Anne.

Steinberg was playing some new music to Helen, and Anne sat in the bow window, embroidering a workbag in silk.

She seemed not much inclined for conversation, and bent over her work very carefully.

Sir Edward leaned against the window by her side.

“ Did any one ever tell you,” he said, after he had been looking earnestly at her for some time, “ that you have grown lately very like your sister ? ”

“ Oh ! yes, mamma has often said so,” replied Anne, without lifting up her eyes, “ and I am very glad of it.”

“ You are wearing your hair like Miss Merton,” he said, after another pause.

“ Oh ! because the sea air took out my curls,” said Anne, blushing ; “ I do not pretend to that style.”

“ I have never ceased to think of your kindness to me that night,” said Sir Edward, in a low voice.

Anne looked up, but she did not know what to reply, and she looked down again, and searched in her basket for the scissors.

Sir Edward found them on the table, and gave them to her. This was an unusual mark of attention on his part, and Anne blushed still more.

“Do you like Worthing?” he asked.

“Oh! yes,” replied Anne, “it is so quiet. I was so glad that mamma did not determine upon going to Brighton.”

“I am going to Brighton to-morrow,” he said, “and I shall be sorry that you are not there.”

Anne paid great attention to the convolvulus she was working.

“I have been so happy in your society,” he said; “that without it, I feel a blank which nothing can supply.”

“As mamma and Helen don’t hear that pretty compliment,” said Anne, “I must say thank you, for all three.”

“It was no compliment, and it was addressed to you alone,” replied Sir Edward.

Anne thought proper to take no notice of this last speech.

“Do you suppose,” continued Sir Edward, “that I was merely using the language of civility, instead of expressing my feelings? Is it my habit?”

“No,” said Anne; “this is quite a little freak of yours. I don’t know how to account for it.”

“ May I tell you ? ” he asked.

Anne looked calmly up in his face. She was so like Helen !

“ I — dare not,” he said, after a moment’s hesitation.

“ I dare say it is quite as well,” replied Anne, returning to her work.

“ I do like Sir Edward, I confess,” said Mrs. Marshall, as soon as he had taken his leave that night. “ It is very strange, my dear Anne, that Helen never could endure him.”

“ She thought he was not good tempered,” said Anne.

“ Quite a mistake ! his ill-humour was only skin deep. I could always banter him out of it in a minute.”

“ But Helen never banters,” said Anne, smiling.

“ Now I will allow one great thing to Eric,” said Mrs. Marshall ; “ he is never obstinate about trifles. A man is always quite suré to be provided with the faults of his own sex ; but when he adds to these the failings of a woman, he is, I must say, intolerable ! ”

“ Thank you, cousin,” said Steinberg, turning round ; “ I recollect you once promised to give me a character if I stood in need of one.”

The next day Sir Edward was still at Worthing, and naturally, Helen being occupied, he was constantly at the side of Anne. Day after day passed, and still he remained. Shortly after his arrival, there was a very pretty place to be sold near Colonel Marshall’s, and he strongly advised his nephew to buy it. It was settled, therefore, that they should all return sooner than was intended to superintend the purchase.

The day before they left Worthing, Anne wandered about from one room to another, as if she had something very important on her mind, and did not exactly know how to communicate it.

At last, however, when all the preparations were made, she came close to her mother, and blushing the deepest crimson, said —

“ Mamma, Sir Edward wants to know if you could part with both your daughters at once.”

“ My dear,” said her mamma, not comprehending directly the drift of the question, what can that possibly signify to him ? ”

“ Because, Mamma — O Helen, do help me ! ”

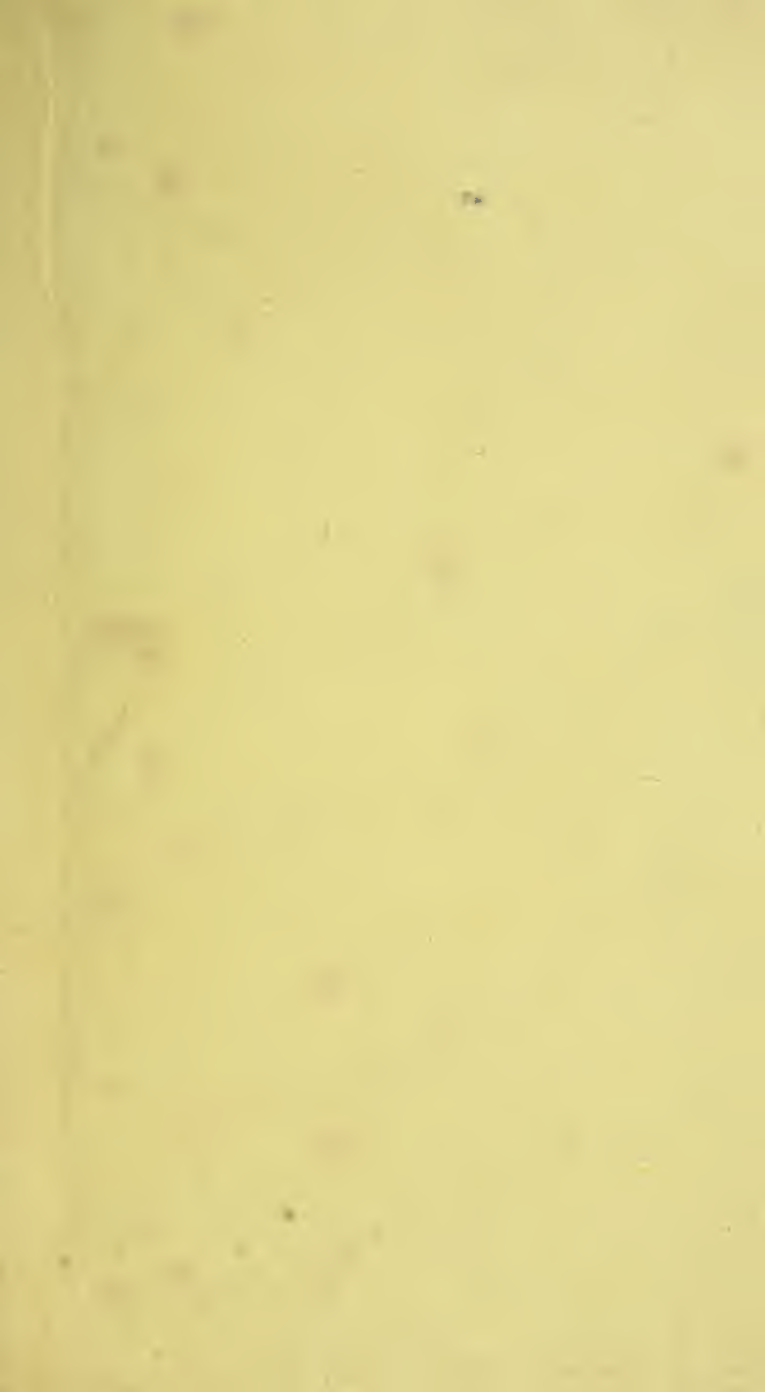
“ Because,” said Helen, taking her sister’s hand, “ if you found Anne particularly troublesome just now, Sir Edward would be so obliging as to take charge of her for you.”

It is said that Mrs. Merton found means to endure the parting with both her daughters, the more easily as they were scarcely removed from her ; and the neighbourhood never could make up its mind as to which had the greatest share of happiness — “ that sweet Lady Falconer, or the magnificent Baroness Steinberg.”

THE END.

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